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Middlebury responds to criticism from Fox News over accusations of antisemitism

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Editor in Chief

Fox News published a story describing a formal complaint filed by StandWithUs Center for Legal Justice accusing Middlebury College of failing to provide protection for Jewish students facing antisemitism on campus.

The article, published on Feb. 16, cites a complaint from StandWithUs filed with the Department of Education in mid-January, which states that Middlebury is violating its obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide a school environment free from discrimination based on race, color or national origin. The complaint referenced several examples of the alleged "hostile campus climate for Jews," including administrative treatment of Jewish students planning a vigil to honor victims of the Oct. 7 attack, students' dismissed attempts to establish a Chabad organization on campus and college officials' failure to properly handle Jewish students' reports of antisemitic slogans on campus.

StandWithUs is an organization that seeks to combat rising antisemitism on American college campuses, according to its website.

The college responded to the Fox News story with the launch of a webpage on Tuesday, Feb. 20, titled "Middlebury's Educational Approaches to the War in Israel and Gaza."

The webpage describes the college's community standards in supporting dialogue within and across Jewish, Muslim, Israeli and Palestinian student communities on campus. It also lists the education and support services available to the Middlebury community surrounding this issue, including the Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation, the Coalition for Dismantling Antisemitism at Middlebury and the Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life.

"We are aware of a complaint filed with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). If OCR contacts us, we will of course fully cooperate," the college wrote in a statement to The Campus. "In the meantime, the important work of education-historical awareness, engaging across difference, groundbreaking initiatives in the area of conflict transformation and ensuring our students are supported — continues every day."

Neither Middlebury Chabad nor the Middlebury College Hillel organization were directly involved with filing the complaint taken up by StandWithUs. "We supported the students and responded to questions," Rabbi Binyamin Murray, executive director of Middlebury Chabad wrote in an email to The Campus of the organization's role in the complaint filed with StandWithUs and the Department of Education.

The Middlebury College Hillel Board wrote in an email to The Campus that as an organization it is not taking an official position on the demands and charges made by StandWithUs.

Both the StandWithUs complaint and an anonymous Middlebury student quoted in the Fox News article described college administrators' disparate, discriminatory treatment toward Jewish students planning a vigil to honor victims of the Oct. 7 war and students in the Muslim Students' Association (MSA) planning a vigil for Palestinian lives. The Jewish students were told by administrators not to have a police presence at the event and to hide references to Israel,

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Middlebury applications drop to three-year low amidst tuition increases, turbulent year in college admissions

By RYAN McELROY
Managing Editor

TOM NEVINS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury's Admissions Office, located in the Emma Willard House, recently shared a statement on the college's continued dedication to inclusive admissions, as well as demographic statistics about the class of 2028 early decision admits.

Over a month after the college's regular decision deadline and seven months since the Supreme Court prohibited affirmative action, Middlebury announced it had received 12,540 applicants for the classes of 2028 and 2028.5, marking a six percent decrease from the record-setting 13,297 applicants last year.

Twelve days later, the college announced the incoming class of 2028 would join current students in seeing a 3.5% increase in cost of attendance, to $86,850 total, for the upcoming year.

The college's Feb. 7 statement on admission practices, unusually detailed in its characterization of the third-largest applicant pool in college history, reflected the challenging new situation colleges face in weighing the court's decision — and the threat of future legal action— against institutional commitments to diversity and inclusion.

"Our pool of Middlebury applicants is strong, mission aligned, and highly academically capable," wrote President Laurie Patton, Dean of Admissions Nicole Curvin and General Counsel Hannah Ross in the statement. "We remain interested in the lived experiences of students applying to Middlebury."

They also acknowledged the challenges facing higher education in recent months, noting the decline in the number of students graduating high school, growing doubt in the value of higher education and national scrutiny of

"The Supreme Court decision on the use of race in college admissions has not altered Middlebury's commitment to serving our mission," she wrote in an email to The Campus.

The college stated that it accepted 425 students from its largest-ever pool of Early Decision I applicants. Middlebury has not yet released data regarding Early Decision II. It remains to be seen how the combined Early Decision I and II rounds compare to past cycles, which saw 516 students admitted early in 2023 and 438 in 2022, setting records each year.

"While I can't speak for other institutions, my sense is that for highly selective colleges like Middlebury, there has been growth in students applying through early rounds," Curvin wrote when asked about the largest-ever pool of Early Decision applicants.

Curvin shared more information about the college's outreach and students with diverse lived experiences including regions like the South and Midwest."

She added that Middlebury admissions staff will attend the National College Admissions Conferences in Texas, California, Illinois and Pennsylvania this coming year to talk about Middlebury and the admissions process. The college also partners with College Horizons, an organization committed to increasing Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian educational access and success, according to Curvin.

Professor of Political Science Bert Jonhson noted the increased outreach to students who do not already know about Middlebury, as well as the college's reflection on larger themes in higher education.

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LOCAL

Addison County State's Attorney faces DUI charge after police reports say she responded to a crime scene

By COLE CHAUDHARI
News Editor

Eva Vekos, the state attorney for Addison County, has been charged with a DUI after showing up at a Bridport, Vt. crime scene impaired.

Vekos has been the state attorney for Addison County since November 2022, and she is currently just over a quarter of the way into the standard four-year term.

Vekos, 54, moved to Vermont in 2015 and began working for Marsh & Wagner P.C., an attorney's office in Middlebury, Vt., according to reporting by The Addison Independent in 2022, prior to her election.

On Nov. 8, 2022, Vekos defeated Addison County Deputy State Attorney Peter Bevere in the general election.

A Feb. 12 press release from the Office of the Vermont Attorney General detailed that on Jan. 25, some time after 8 p.m., Vekos reported to a crime scene on Swinton Road in Bridport to investigate a suspicious death alongside Vermont State Police troopers.

According to affidavits written by the police officers present, Vekos was slurring her speech and smelled of intoxicants, prompting the surrounding troopers to question

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Middlebury receives $1.48 million grant from Mellon Foundation to address migrant justice through the humanities

By LIV SANCHEZ
Staff Writer

Through the Axinn Center for the Humanities Middlebury has received a $1.48 million grant from the Mellon Foundation's Humanities for All Times, an initiative that fosters education and research on migrant justice in Vermont and globally through the creation of thirty new Public Humanities Labs. The news of the grant's acceptance was announced in a campus-wide email released on Feb. 2.

The grant proposal was written in 2019 by Professor of History Ian Barrow, Associate Professor of History of Art & Architecture Carrie Anderson, Henry N. Hudson Professor of English Marion Wells and Professor of History Febe Armanios. Wells and Armanios are the co-founders of the Axinn Center for the Humanities, and Barrow and Anderson are its current directors. Each professor holds the position of Principal Investigator on the grant and distributes the allocated funds amongst faculty.

The four grant authors spoke with The Campus about their involvement with the Axinn Center for the Humanities, the acquisition of the Mellon grant and their thoughts on current attitudes about the humanities.

One of the grant's primary aims is to help fix what Wells referred to as a "crisis occurring in the humanities," which she attributed to a pedagogical issue of framing.

"Our goal was to create a hub for the study of humanities on campus and a set of resources for students and faculty, and we came down to focus on two central things: pedagogy and research," Wells said.

In their 2019 proposal, Wells and Armanios stressed the importance of key skills developed in humanities studies. Wells listed the examples of cogent writing, constructing arguments, critical thinking and global cultural awareness.

The Public Humanities Labs initiative was proposed by Wells and Armanios to remedy the lack of professional applications for humanities skills that exist for students within the classroom. According to Wells, it is the lack of clarity concerning the practical possibilities for skills one can gain that discourages many students from pursuing careers in the humanities.

"The skills that you learn across the curriculum and humanities classes will go on to serve you very well in employment, which isn't always a narrative that students hear," Wells said. "I think the Mellon Foundation really agrees with that, so a big part of our application was highlighting just how we're going to include and incorporate and strengthen these humanities skills in the context of the [labs]."

The Public Humanities Lab program was created in service of both concentrations and designed to emphasize the importance of experiential learning, according to Wells. The Humanities Labs are designed to culminate in the creation of what Wells called a "public-facing component" — students consolidate the research conducted throughout the course of the lab into a publicly-accessible module, such as a website or museum exhibit.

The thirty new Humanities Labs funded by the grant will focus on issues of migration within and beyond Vermont, and will be specially designed to foster partnerships between faculty, students and local organizations working on issues of migrant justice.

The grant officially came through in November but was embargoed until January, so the note recently went out to humanities faculty with information about the

SKILES ROBERTS-SALVADOR

application process for grant money.

"Faculty will apply and propose to do public humanities labs courses under the general umbrella of Migrant Justice in Vermont and beyond," Armanios explained.

"We've had a lot of interest," Wells added.

Barrow is constructing a proposal for a course about South Asian migration in which he hopes to collaborate with local communities to educate students about the past and current issues of South Asian

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Mia White '26.5 wins seventh annual Spencer Prize speech

TODD BALFOUR / COURTESY PHOTO

The finalists in the Spencer Prize speech competition presented their speeches in the Championship round on Jan. 30 in Mahaney Art Center's

By EDITH MAUCH
Staff Writer

Mia White '26.5 took home the trophy for the seventh annual Spencer Prize Championship for her speech about discussing theories formulated by Judith Butler with her community friend.

Named after the late Professor Emeritus and former trustee of Middlebury College John Spencer, the Spencer Prize Championship is a speech competition presented by Oratory Now for first year students at Middlebury. On Jan. 30 in Mahaney Arts Center's Robison Hall, six finalists each delivered a five-minute speech in response to the prompt, "Connect something you've discovered in a Middlebury class to something you care about. Can you get your audience to care too?"

The selection process for the Spencer Prize Championship allowed faculty to nominate up to four students from the classes of 2026.5 and 2027.

"Nominations are asked to recognize students for public speaking potential as well as current ability, or for their eloquence and engagement in classroom discussions," according to the Oratory Now website.

As a former professor of African history and trustee, Spencer emphasized the importance of oral presentation skills.

"Many current faculty will remember him as a mentor, offering sage advice about how to survive and be exceptional at Middlebury," said Ted Perry, Fletcher professor of the arts emeritus, quoted on the Spencer Prize website. "Many students will remember his extraordinarily helpful role in emphasizing oral presentations, a practice he made central to success in his classes. He knew it was a skill they would need in whatever life's work they chose."

After the students participated in three qualifying events judged by faculty and staff, the championship event featured the six finalists: Alison Penner '27, Juan Salazar '27, Meghasha Dangal '27, Israel Ostos '27, Weronika Wozny '27 and White. Judges for the championship round included Vice President for Student Affairs Smita Ruzicka, Vice President for Advancement Dan Courcey, Dean of First Year Experience Sabrina Durand and alumnus Mark Collins '79.

After an energetic competition, much anticipation from the crowd and the Oratory Now tradition of the "Viking Drumroll," White was named the event's winner. In her speech, she spoke about how theories formulated by Judith Butler were useful in conversations with her community friend. "I talked about Judith Butler's theory of gender performance and how I noticed its relevance in conversations with my community friend. It was striking to me that such a complex theory was so applicable and relevant even in conversations with a 10 year old," White said in a message to The Campus.

From Seattle, White is on the crew team, works at Crossroads Café, and does rock climbing, puzzling, sledding and skiing in her free time.

White was excited to win the competition and proud to have competed with other talented students. "I kind of buffered when they called my name because I genuinely didn't expect it. All of the finalists gave such compelling, impressive speeches and I was just proud to stand up there with such an awesome group of people," she said. "It was such an honor to win and I'm just happy my speech resonated with so many people."

The cohort was invited to a social event with their fellow nominees, a specially designed Spencer Speechwriting Workshop run by student speakers from the previous Spencer Prize competitions and a one-on-one delivery practice session with one of Oratory Now's peer coaches.

White said she appreciated the workshops hosted by Oratory Now as she prepared for the competition. "I had no idea what I was going to talk about until I went to a workshop hosted by oratory now and was able to talk with some of the awesome coaches and brainstorm in a low stakes environment," she said.

"I must have heard the different parts of the event rehearsed many times before the actual night, but it was really lovely to see all the moving parts come together nicely," Alpana Bakshi '26, a co-producer of this year's championship, told The Campus. "We Oratory coaches put in many hours behind the scenes, planning and prepping, and I just felt super grateful for having such a great team of people to make it happen."

Salazar said that he was excited to receive an email notifying him of his nomination for the competition, despite not previously knowing what it was.

"I enjoy taking on challenges, and having set myself to have a busy J-Term, preparing for the Spencer Prize qualifying rounds and grand championship positively added to the wish of mine to be better and help others through the process," Salazar said.

Wozny said that the Spencer Prize competition was simultaneously challenging and rewarding.

"On one side, I was so tremendously happy and grateful that I had the opportunity to share my story, but on the other hand, the mere thought of speaking in front of someone was causing a spike in my pulse," she explained .

Wozny described finding the initial speech-writing process difficult, but used the advice of Professor of Theatre Dana Yeaton to go deeper with initial content.

"In the beginning, I had no idea how to go about that advice. Fortunately, after many conversations, I realized that in order to reach that depth, I needed honesty and a little vulnerability, both with the people in the audience and myself. It felt scary, but reflecting on the whole experience, I am incredibly happy with the end result and proud that I shared my truth," she added.

Xander Bowles '26, a co-producer of this year's competition, described the championship as a culmination of everyone's hard work throughout the process. "It's fun to see it all come together and know I played a role in that," Bowles said.

Bowles added that being a co-producer of the championship this year was a full circle moment, as he was a nominee for the prize last year.

Bakshi described the excitement of watching the speakers grow and progress on stage from the qualifying rounds to their final speeches. "I was a Spencer Prize competitor and it was one of the most rewarding experiences I had as a first-year, finding myself through storytelling and having the opportunity to share that story. It was amazing to witness that now as a producer for the new round of speakers," she said.

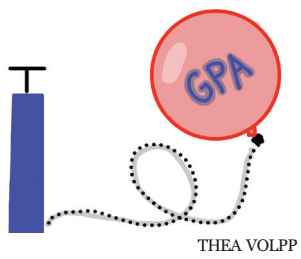
Both student competitors and organizers found being a part of this year's event rewarding. "I'm really pleased with how this year's Spencer Prize has gone and I'm looking forward to seeing it grow. We've already got notes and plans going for next year," Bakshi said.

"I'm... immensely grateful for everyone who helped me through the whole process," Wozny said, expressing her thanks to the Oratory Now team, her friends and family, for making the experience worthwhile.

Bakshi added that after the success of this year's championship, the Oratory Now team already has plans in the works for next year's event.

Average GPA rose to 3.65 last spring, prompting concern over sustained grade inflation

By TEJAS SRINIVASAN
News Editor



THEA VOLPP

For better or for worse, grades are at the center of higher education. Middlebury's selective admissions process demands that applicants show rigorous academic achievements on high school transcripts; Latin and departmental honors at college graduation have GPA thresholds; graduate institutions look upon student grades as an indicator of skill level; and employers, especially within the fields of consulting and finance, might only seek to interview students with the highest GPAs.

Grades are used ubiquitously to assess student performance, but what do they say about the institution?

The last time the college officially set out to assess its grading practices was in 2005 with the Educational Affairs Committee's Ad Hoc Committee on Grading.

The report defined grade inflation as a breakdown in the evaluation system in which grades are increasing more rapidly than the quality of the work being graded. Data published in the report indicated a steady rise in the grades of Middlebury students from an average GPA just above 3.0 in 1987 to about 3.35 in 2005.

Further data from a September 2023 faculty meeting showed the average GPA rising up to 3.65 in spring 2023, as well as a spike to 3.88 on average in spring 2020, likely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the fluctuating virtual methods of instruction and examination that came with it.

The data points to grades steadily rising, and the report aimed to investigate any confounding variables that could possibly account for this change.

"This might, on the surface, seem to be a confirmation that grade inflation is occurring: the average grade has increased by approximately 10% over a 15 year period... However, a closer examination indicates that grade inflation, as defined previously, is but one of several competing explanations that might explain this pattern," the 2005 report wrote.

The college becoming more selective over the years, and an increasing number of incoming students in the top 10% of their high school class, along with varying class sizes and methods of assessment across departments are all potential explanations for grade inflation, according to the 2005 report.

"We were unable to conclude... whether grades have risen in an inflationary fashion," it explained.

As sentiments on campus about grading practices and intellectual rigor have grown in recent years, understanding the nature of rising grades at Middlebury requires looking at how and why grades are assigned.

The report outlined several possible interpretations of what grades can be used for: a mechanism to rank students in the class; an indicator of a student's mastery of the course materials; an incentive; and as feedback to modify instructional methods.

Rick Bunt, associate dean of the sciences and professor of chemistry, spoke with The Campus to provide an administrative and faculty perspective on grading practices. Bunt, who has been a faculty member at Middlebury since 1998, described his experience teaching organic chemistry, a historically demanding course, and a requirement for medical school applications.

"Early on in my career if someone got a B+ in organic chemistry, they were super excited... now most students consider a B+ to be a poor grade," Bunt explained.

He noted that the expectations have changed, independent of performance, and lower marks are now considered punitive. "Grades are getting higher; I don't think every single student who comes out of chemistry classes has necessarily mastered the material at an expert level anymore... that's kind of grade inflation," Bunt said.

Gage Schrier '24.5, a creative writing and political science major, lamented the trend of rising grades.

"Uniform grading not only robs us of an opportunity to assess our educational progress, but creates strong incentives to stay away from classes where you could risk something less than an A," Schrier told The Campus.

These trends of grade inflation are not unique to Middlebury.

A December 2023 op-ed in The Wall Street Journal titled "Grade Inflation Makes A The New C" cataloged several students' opinions on rising grades at institutions across the country. Some students sought to return to an environment where rigorous grading is used to rank students, while others spoke of detaching student performance from grades entirely, in order to facilitate a more earnest learning experience. This national trend raises questions for people about the meaning of student assessments.

Professors cannot grade in a vacuum, and there are naturally other variables that can also account for rising grades. The 2005 report illustrated that the caliber of students matriculating into the school has increased, and Bunt referenced the quality of teaching increasing at the college. But comparing subjects with vastly different modes of assessment is also challenging.

Julian Calder '24, a physics and computer science double major, spoke of his experience with the varying methods of grading across departments.

"It is a largely unavoidable result of the structure and content of different courses," Calder told The Campus. "It is sometimes frustrating to compare the GPAs across different departments because they vary so widely."

GPA averages amongst respondents to the 2023 Zeitgeist 5.0 survey was even higher than the official data reported by the college in September 2023. There was minimal variation across class years, and the class of 2026 had the lowest mean GPA at 3.72 while the class of 2025.5 had the highest at 3.82.

Simultaneously, however, The Campus has covered high academic stress amongst the student body. This paradox — where grades and student stress are both at an all time high — is difficult to untangle.

Calder acknowledged the various pressures present for students to achieve high grades,but said that he consciously tries to minimize such pressure and just focus on grasping the course materials to the best of his ability.

Bunt speculated that, in some ways, higher average grades may contribute to student stress.

"When grades become so much higher overall, the fear of failure becomes greater... you have to be perfect on every paper you write and every exam you take... that's a really tough way to go through four years in my opinion," he said.

Rising grades force students to constantly strive for an A out of fear of their GPA going down or destabilizing any postgraduation plans, which in turn leads to greater stress. Bunt suggested that normalizing a wider range of grades across disciplines could help alleviate the student stress that stems from a constant slog for perfection.

The college has tried to assist students with the inclusion of the Credit/No Credit option: students are able to test out subjects foreign to them, and not be penalized for a low grade. Bunt said he worries, however, that the Credit/No Credit option is not being used for its intended purpose.

"More often than not, I see students using it to erase lower grades," he said.

Grading practices factor into students' course selection decisions, sometimes leading students to enroll in courses just because of their reputation as easy As. But Schrier has the opposite approach, saying that he often avoids classes rumored to be easy As, and took a political science course by Charles A. Dana Professor of Political Science Murray Dry, because he was excited by the topical difficulty and rigorous grading that the class promised.

Calder expressed similar sentiments.

"I've never avoided a class because of fear of low grades because I believe that if I'm taking a course that I am passionate about and invested in, this will be reflected in the grades I receive," he said.

Finding true grade inflation requires a test that is not feasible in an academic setting, but Bunt suggests a paradigm shift in order to diminish the stress that grades can bring for students.

"How seldom grades actually impact your life after Middlebury is something I think students should realize... after your first job, nobody really cares about your transcript ever again... I think people overestimate how long their grades will follow them along," he explained.

Thefts from cars increase on campus, leading to new warnings for student lots

By EDITH MAUCH
Staff Writer

An increase in thefts from vehicles in student parking lots in recent weeks led Public Safety to urge caution and vigilance from students.

An email sent by Associate Vice President for Safety at Middlebury College Demitria Kirby to the campus community on Feb. 11 mentioned the increase in reports from the previous weekend, and provided general safety measures. "People who commit crimes are often on the lookout for opportunities such as unlocked windows or doors. Lock your vehicle and take your keys with you," Kirby wrote in the email.

Additional thefts from vehicles in the Porter Hospital parking lot have been reported since the Feb. 11 email, according to Kirby. "Witnesses were able to provide images of the suspects, which can be seen on the Police Department's social media," Kirby wrote in an email to The Campus.

These thefts were not the first instances in the Middlebury community in recent memory. In March 2023, the campus community received an email warning of car thefts from on-campus lots.

When car-related crimes have occurred in the past, such as last spring, they were of a different nature.

"This was specific to the motor vehicles themselves being taken for joy riding. Some level of theft is likely to occur within any community. However, many appear to be impulsive crimes of opportunity," Kirby continued.

Kirby described how the current and past break-ins differ in that, in the current string of thefts, the individuals are moving between multiple parking lots and have shown signs of pre-meditation.

"As you'll see in the images on the Middlebury Police Departments page, they're wearing masks to cover their faces. They're also carrying bags to load items into," Kirby said.

Kirby also mentioned some of the difficulties she faces as a member of the Public Safety Department.

"The challenging part is trying to find methods to engage that do not seem intrusive. More than anything, we want to build a relationship with our community so we can be seen as a supportive resource rather than a punitive enforcer," Kirby said. "We regularly hear that members of our community are operating under the misconception that we are law enforcement, which is not the case. We are unarmed and non-sworn. Our purpose is purely to support the educational goals of our community by delivering safety services."

The school recommends that students remain vigilant, keep their cars locked and report anything suspicious to Public Safety.

MIDDLEBURY HIRES NEW CLASS DEAN FOR FIRST YEARS, BRINGING TOTAL TO FOUR

By ANABELLE LAPP
Contributing Writer

The college announced changes to the composition of the class dean structure in early February, marked in part by the hiring of new dean, Sabrina Durand, this past fall.

While there were previously three class deans — a dean for first years, a dean for sophomores, and a single dean shared between juniors and seniors — Durand's arrival this fall means there are now four class deans. With the addition of a fourth dean, some previous deans have moved to work with different class years this semester: Jen Sellers became the dean of the junior year experience, and Scott Barnicle moved into the role of the dean of the senior year experience. Matt Longman remains the dean of the sophomore year experience and MariAnn Osborne the class dean coordinator.

In an email to The Campus, Derek Doucet, associate vice president and dean of students, discussed the considerations that went into the decision to shift from a three-dean system to a four-dean system. He wrote that the use of the three-dean system rested on the assumption that junior and senior students would require less support as they advanced in their Middlebury careers, as they would be more familiar with the college's resources and processes than younger students.

"Those assumptions proved correct — juniors and seniors do utilize student support resources, in the aggregate, less frequently than their younger counterparts, but not to a sufficient degree to make the three-dean structure optimal for students or sustainable for the dean," Doucet wrote. "We therefore decided to move to a four-dean system to better serve our junior and senior students, and make the job more sustainable for the dean."

His colleagues agreed that this updated system would enhance support for Middlebury students across all classes.

"By separating out the Class Deans for the Junior and Senior Years, we will be able to focus more of our efforts on supporting students as they navigate high impact experiences such as study abroad, internships and supervised research in addition to providing guidance to students as they prepare for the transition to their lives beyond the Middlebury campus," Jen Sellers wrote in an email to The Campus.

Sellers believes that despite the difficulty inherent to any transition, all members of the class dean team are excited about the group's increased capacity to engage with students in a more focused manner over their four years at Middlebury.

"The role of the Class Dean is to support students in conceptualizing, working towards, and achieving their collegiate goals . . . Class Deans want to create opportunities for students to understand how all types of experiences – the great, the neutral, and even the not so great – are giving them skills and perspectives that their future selves will benefit from . . . Class Deans also spend considerable time helping students understand the myriad types of support that are available to them. Middlebury is a resource rich institution, but sometimes these resources can become overwhelming," Sellers said.

Doucet added that deans are often a primary form of support for many students and that establishing a relationship with one's dean can greatly enrich the collegiate experience.

Some students agree that the addition of a fourth class dean will enhance support for students on campus.

"I think having two deans for the junior and senior classes will be better because it will encourage people to keep using them as a resource if needed as we go throughout our college experience," said Tatum Peskin '24.

"I've had pretty limited experience with my dean at Middlebury. I remember getting really sick my freshman year and having to get a dean's excuse for my school work, but I haven't interacted with my dean at all since then," Violet Ross '25 said. "Despite this, I think adding an extra class dean is probably a good thing for Middlebury students, given the support/advocacy that deans offer and the rise of mental health issues we've seen on campus in the past couple of years," she added.

Given the important roles that deans play in the lives of students at Middlebury, both Doucet and Sellers welcome these recent changes as they will increase the capacity of deans to actively support students.

"There is so much to be excited about! The junior year is a time in students' lives when they get to 'try out' possible futures and apply their learning in very tangible ways," Sellers wrote, in reference to taking on her new role as dean of the junior experience. "In just these few short days, I have really enjoyed hearing about what students are doing. I've also appreciated students' willingness to share challenges with me. This allows me to better support them in the moment, and it also allows me to think about ways I might be able to offer proactive guidance and support to future students."

MIDDLEBURY RESPONDS TO ACCUSATIONS OF ANTISEMITISM

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according to the complaint and the student.

"There is no indication that the Muslim Student Association faced any such restrictions," StandWithUs wrote.

The Muslim Students' Association declined to comment on their mention in the Fox News story.

There was a police presence at the Middlebury Chabad and Jewish students' vigil on Oct. 11, according to the Middlebury Police Department log, as well as at the MSA vigil on Nov. 9, according to club leadership.

Jewish students collaborated with the Chabad organization, based in the town of Middlebury, to plan the vigil for lives lost in Israel. Murray described how the Chabad organization supported Jewish Middlebury students in making their idea of a vigil a reality.

"It was beautiful and an honor to be able to support the students who put their hearts and souls into the 'Jewish Unity Vigil,' even when they experienced repeated push back and problems from the administration to overcome," Murray wrote.

According to members of the Middlebury College Hillel Board, lines of communication between Hillel and the college administration have been open, and the college has been willing to speak with students who wish to do so about antisemitism on campus.

While the Hillel board was not involved in filing the complaint with StandWithUs, the board acknowledged that Middlebury may indeed feel like a hostile environment for some Jewish people on campus.

"Some students have expressed feelings of discomfort and have indeed felt as though they are being targeted on Middlebury's campus; some students do not feel this way at all," the Hillel Board wrote to The Campus.

Murray agreed with the Title VI complaint's assertion that there are students who are afraid to speak out about their Jewish and/or Israeli pride, and feel stigmatized for their identity.

"It saddens us to hear complaints from current students, as well as alumni going back decades, and we would love to see a stigma we often hear of Middlebury 'not being a place for Jews" replaced with a campus full of Jewish pride and acceptance,' Murray wrote.

The StandWithUs complaint cited by Fox News described the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) student organization's actions during the Oct. 12 Day of Resistance as another example of anti-Jewish behavior on campus.

"SJP intimidated students in a Middlebury dining hall and blocked the doors to it," the complaint read. "Despite receiving reports of this harassment and false imprisonment, Middlebury's administration did not enforce its own policies barring behavior that impedes another student's ability to communicate or move freely and offered no alternative support to the impacted students."

Joshua Glucksman '24.5, a member of SJP, described the allegations of SJP blocking and harassing Jewish students outside of dining halls as having been brought up and thoroughly investigated months ago. "The SJP board took this claim seriously and checked with all the tablets to make sure they didn't harass students, and also did the due diligence of talking to administrators who informed us they were closely monitoring the club during the event and that no rules were broken," Glucksman wrote in a message to The Campus.

Glucksman added that as a Jewish student, he has not felt as though Middlebury is a hostile atmosphere for Jewish students.

"The only hostilities I have felt related to my Jewish identity is from Zionist Jewish students who do not support Palestinian liberation," he wrote.

StandWithUs also described concerns in the Fox News article about the college refusing to recognize a Chabad organization on campus, and dismissing Jewish students' complaints about an antisemitic slogan posted on a dorm door.

The college wrote on the newly launched Educational Approaches webpage that calls for genocide and other evidence of a hostile environment at Middlebury go against college policy.

"Middlebury has zero tolerance for threats to individuals or groups, and all members of the Middlebury College community would be held accountable under several different policies," the website reads.

The website cites a number of procedures for dealing with complaints of bigotry on campus, including the Community Bias Response Team, the Civil Rights and Title IX Office, the Student Conduct Office and informal conflict transformation processes.

The college has not received notice of a potential complaint from the Office of Civil Rights at this time, as Associate Vice President for Public Affairs Julia Ferrante wrote in response to Fox News' request for comment on the StandWithUS complaint.

The StandWithUs complaint summarized its issues with the college's treatment of Jewish students on campus in four demands — first, reverse so-called punitive measures against the Jewish student who reported antisemitic words written on a dorm door, second, recognize Chabad formally as a student organization, third, fully investigate all incidents of antisemitic behavior described for violations of university policy and fourth, adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism.

Murray expressed his support for the demands StandWithUs outlined in its statement.

"Our role is consistently to support the Jewish students at Middlebury," he added.

Though not involved as an organization with filing the complaint, Middlebury Hillel unequivocally condemned antisemitism in its email to The Campus.

"We urge the college to swiftly address any and all acts of discrimination," Hillel wrote. "Hillel seeks to provide Jewish students with a space — full of empathy and understanding — to simply be."

The college statement conveyed pride at how Middlebury students, faculty and staff "engage peacefully, openly, constructively, regularly, and rigorously on deeply concerning issues such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and the Israel-Hamas war."

"We will not tolerate and have not tolerated discriminatory behavior on our campus," the statement reads.

Middlebury applications drop to three-year low amidst tuition increases, turbulent year in college admissions

Continued from Page 1

"The college's policies as it shared in its admissions update were largely what I expected this summer and fall in the wake of the Supreme Court decision," Johnson said.

Professor of Political Science Matthew Dickinson shared his thoughts with The Campus on the recent admissions update and the state of higher education in the United States in general.

"I think the college has to be very careful legally, in how they publicly describe their applicant pool, so as not to run aground of the Supreme Court's warning that you just can't go back to racial based admissions by another means," Dickinson said. "I think the college is telling us it hasn't changed its goals, but the means for achieving them are a process that they are still refining."

Dickinson also expressed concern about attracting ideological diversity to campus, based largely in the diploma divide — how college-educated people become more extreme in their political views than the average American. Zeitgeist 5.0 found that only 7% of respondents identified themselves as any form of conservative.

While general information has been publicly announced in past years, this year's announcement discussed the applicant pool in considerably more detail.

Of those admitted in Early Decision I, 43 students are the first in their families to attend college — as opposed to 26 such students in the same round last year — or roughly 10% of the overall group. Thirty-three students, or eight percent of the total admitted in Early Decision I, were international students. Of the students admitted to classes of 2027 and 2027.5, 24% were first-generation and 14% international students.

Johnson noted the updated outreach policies to students who had not heard of Middlebury or who had not formed positive opinions of the college. He further explained that the college may be hesitant to make major changes to its policies until other institutions work through ongoing and forthcoming legal challenges.

"One way in which I think [Middlebury] is trying to get a diverse student body, it's to get a diverse applicant pool, to do everything we can to reach those pockets of areas in which you're more likely to get somebody who was first gen or a racial minority," Dickinson added.

In the Early Decision I round, Middlebury also matched with seven Questbridge scholars — high-achieving, low-income high school seniors who applied for full-ride scholarships to Middlebury — who will join the college this fall as the second such cohort following the program's establishment at Middlebury in 2022.

The college also described the overall applicant pool, identifying the ten states with the most applicants as New York, California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, Texas, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida and Virginia.

Middlebury also shared that it received applications from 156 countries, with 716 — or six percent of all applicants — from China alone. Next in descending order were Ghana, with 341 applicants, Canada, with 272, Pakistan, with 234, and India, with 165. Rounding out the top ten were the U.K., with 155 applicants, Mongolia, with 153, Kenya, with 148, Japan, with 127, and Kazakhstan, with 113. Applicants from just 10 out of the 156 total countries made up almost 20% of the total applicant pool this year.

Last year the college accepted students from 45 countries, but did not state the precise number of students from each nation. Middlebury is need-blind for domestic students, but may consider the ability of international students to pay when making admissions decisions. The college meets 100% of demonstrated financial need for accepted students.

Dickinson also described a potential conflict between the increasing reliance on college donors to fund access opportunities and college's institutional independence, citing recent conflicts between wealthy alumni and institutions such as Harvard University and University of Pennsylvania as part of larger discussion over the power of donors.

"You need these applicants, you want diverse applicants, you're reaching out. But they need to be able to afford to come here. I can't tell you the numbers, but donors can be an important resource that allows the college to diversify its pool, but what's the price that comes with those donors' support? And if they threaten to withdraw that support? I think it raises complications about independence for college administrations," Dickinson said.

Curvin detailed the future for Middlebury admissions and its goal of building an inclusive student body as a community effort between all who live and work here.

"The work ahead will require everyone in the Middlebury community — students, alumni, faculty and staff — to support our efforts for recruitment as we navigate this new terrain. Middlebury will continue to implement its equity and inclusion plans and to value inclusivity by creating an educational community that embraces talent from every corner of the country and the world." Curvin wrote.

Dickinson shared his thoughts on the ultimate mission of the college as a diverse student body in light of the various constraints on Middlebury, naming the rural location in Vermont and small student body as likely limiting factors in whether such a goal is feasible.

"Diversity is measured in so many ways. I'm not sure we'd ever know if we fully achieved it," he added. "We may be very diverse, racially, but not economically, or not ideologically. And so it's a very careful jigsaw puzzle that the admissions people must put together thinking about diversity in all its dimensions."

Middlebury receives $1.48 million grant from Mellon Foundation to address migrant justice through the humanities

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migrants.

Armanios hopes to apply for a portion of the grant money to fund her teachings of a Humanities Lab. The lab would be centered around her research conducted last year in the Ottoman Diaspora in New England project, where she used archival materials from Rhode Island and Vermont to study Middle East migrants living in New England.

Anderson believes that through these initiatives, she can highlight the importance of using writing, research and archival work to further make an impact on the migrant justice movement.

Barrow also described plans for the creation of a faculty research seminar, along with the creators' aim to welcome more visiting speakers on campus. Part of the grant money will also fund annual training sessions for professors teaching the Labs to take place at the end of spring semesters.

He added that they plan to offer up to 15 students an opportunity to do research on migration for a $5,000 stipend.

Wells added that the team hopes to hire a postdoctoral fellow specializing in migration studies for a two-year period. The fellow would teach one class and provide public lectures on their research.

Additionally, the creators organized a workshop scheduled for this March. The workshop will involve ten faculty members engaging in a day of dialogue alongside local organizations focused on issues related to migration. According to Armanios, conversations will center around the best ways to create generative partnerships between faculty, the college and the surrounding community such that future research may be conducted in the least intrusive way possible.

"We think that having thirty new [Humanities Labs] will be really transformative, both for the humanities, but also for the college, in a good way," Barrow said.

Editor's note: Managing Editor Ryan McElroy '25 worked with Professor of History Febe Armanios last summer and fall on her Ottoman Diaspora in New England project.

United for Ukraine: Showcasing Ukrainian Resistance Through Art

By NORAH KHAN

Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / SWITKRITI KHAREL AND JUSICE SILVA

Students perform a dance celebrating Kalyna, a red flower that symbolizes resilience.

Students and community members packed the Mahaney Arts Center to witness the third annual United for Ukraine event. The show was organized by Middlebury College's Ukrainian students in partnership with the Mahaney Arts Center and the Music department, with support from the Office of the President, the Innovation Hub, the Committee on the Arts, the Center for Community Engagement and the Rohatyn Center for International Affairs.

The two-hour performance on Feb. 17 showcased Ukraine's rich and extensive history of resilience through different art forms, including traditional dance, poetry, music and film. This year, the show featured the New York Crimean Tatar Ensemble. The group is the only band playing traditional Crimean Tatar music in the United States and is based in New York City.

Regarding the show's artistic focus, organizer Mariia Dzholos '24 said, "Our art shows and captures a lot of the history of what has been happening to us. In Ukraine, as you can see, art has always existed as a response. And art captures so, so, so well what has been happening to us."

Art has allowed students to put the war in a bigger context, showcasing the long history of Ukrainian strength against oppression.

The night started with an introduction from Ukrainian students Dzholos and Rostyk Yarovyk '25 and was quickly followed by a dance performance by 15 students clothed in crimson shoes and long white dresses. The dance highlighted Kalyna, a bright red flower that symbolizes resilience in Ukrainian culture.

Next, the student band Chapel Hill performed two Ukrainian songs. The songs radiated Ukrainian pride, with powerful vocals from Greg Marcinik '25.5. Afterwards, Kseniia Lebid '26 took to the stage and read "Testament," an 1845 poem by influential Ukrainian writer Taras Shevchenko that remains relevant today with its message of Ukrainian resistance.

Christian A. Johnson Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities Jeffrey Buettner and the Middlebury College Choir graced the stage, performing "The Carol of the Bells" in its original Ukrainian language. Anna Grytsenko '26 shared a powerful story of her great-grandfather and her family's history in Ukraine, emphasizing how Ukraine has been facing imperialistic and violent behavior for generations.

"In the 1930s, being in fear of Ukrainian uprisings and strong national identity, the Soviet regime ordered troops to confiscate all Ukrainians food, tools and land," Grytensko told the crowd.

As a result of the artificial famine and a complete siege, more than four million Ukrainians died within a span of three years. During this time, her great-great-grandfather had his own land that he raised his happy family on.

"At the age of 35, he took his own life. He had no hesitation because the Soviet genocide of Ukrainians left him no hope, no solution after 5 out of his 7 children died," Grytsenko said.

Her words shared a vulnerable but powerful atmosphere of sorrow and anguish that settled over the audience.

Offering a tonal shift, the New York Crimean Tatar Ensemble performed an emotional and lively sequence of songs that brought vivacious energy to the stage. It was one of the most captivating moments of the night, the silky strokes of the violin mixing with the smooth clarinet and keyboard created a beautiful sound throughout four songs.

Afterward, professional dancer Sofia Tretiak '27 performed a traditional Ukrainian dance, enchanting the crowd with her flowy blue dress before reading a poem. The dance was followed by more music from the Chapel Hill band and a poem read by Dzholos titled "Everything Will Be Fine."

A viewing of a music project from artists based in Ukraine detailed the horror many Ukrainians faced on Feb. 24, 2022, when Russia began its assault. The night ended with seven Ukrainian students reciting "Three years now, we've been talking about war." The end of the performance was met with whoops of approval and a standing ovation from the crowd.

"Showing my culture here has been my habit, and I wanted it to be continued," said Dzholos, who has been involved in all three United For Ukraine events. "Seeing leadership, willingness, ownership, and pride to show our culture to others, for my younger Ukrainian classmates... I think I would say for me that is my highlight."

"A lot of people see [the war] as something that happened two years ago and something that, you know, some people say that it's just a proxy war between NATO and Russia. But people don't know about what it is for Ukraine, said fellow organizer Lebid. "This year, the show is about rejecting the most common myths around the war, and showcasing how today's war is just a part of Ukrainians' very long history against Russian imperialism."

International media portrays a specific narrative that the Ukrainian students wanted to broaden, showing the beauty and richness of their country and its people.

"I think we would not have a better world if people only cared about what's happening in their backyard," added Dzholos. "Seeing people whose lives are in peace, right here, in this community of students, seeing them and coming and willing to learn, not only educates but also helps, whether that's calling your congressman, or making a financial donation if their means allow, that helps us to defend ourselves and resist Russia's invasion. But also it helps the world to be more united."

Author Emily St. John Mandel visits Middlebury

By AIDEN AMSTER

Contributing Writer

Canadian novelist and essayist Emily St. John Mandel brought the larger Middlebury community together for an event full of laughter and insights into her work and creative process. The Middlebury student body sat alongside members of 'book clubs' from the college, a high school class, the Vermont Book Shop and 'Tome Talk,' the Ilsley Public Library's discussion group led by Renee Ursiti.

The highly anticipated Feb. 15 event was sponsored by the Climate Action Program, the Environmental Storytelling Program and the Department of Theatre, with support from the English and American Studies departments, the Axinn Center for the Humanities, the Writing & Rhetoric Program, the Vermont Humanities Council and the Ilsley Public Library.

St. John Mandel is the author of six books, including "Station 11," which earned her the Arthur C. Clarke Award. She wasw a finalist for the National Book Award, and her most recent novel, "Sea of Tranquility," was named one of Barack Obama's favorite books of 2022 and long-listed for the 2023 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction.

The conversation last Thursday between St. John Mandel and Professor of Creative Writing Megan Mayhew-Bergman — who met St. John Mandel years ago while doing a reading together at New York University — was followed by a Q&A and book signing. Mayhew-Bergman opened the evening by saying, "I have watched her career soar with so much joy because I know underneath that success is hard work, a great mind, razor-sharp wit and an expansive heart."

"I was raised by hippies in Western Canada," St. John Mandel said. "It was not a good education. I don't recommend it... but having an almost unlimited number of hours to read books was wonderful."

She left her hometown of Delano Island, following her passion for dance to the School of Toronto Dance Theater before eventually discovering that that writing was what she truly loved. As a homeschooled child, she was once asked to write something every day. She never stopped.

"Last Night in Montreal," her debut novel, came from the decision to focus on writing after she closed her chapter on dance. It was a result of supporting herself through four years of working many different day jobs. "I think there's real value in constraint," she said. "It can shape your work, and it can make you a very focused person."

But St. John Mandel does not agree with constraints that others may impose on her writing, as she does not consider her work to belong to a single genre.

"I think we have this mania for categorization, not just as readers but maybe as a species," she said. "The book I am writing now is speculative in the same way that "Sea of Tranquility" is this sort of near-future space."

This interest in the near-future space is apparent in "Station 11," published in 2014, as well.

"It is hard to talk about the future... without the 'apocalyptic,' for obvious reasons," she said. "But there will still be some beauty, and there will be humanity, and there will be joy. I think that our basic interests as a species won't change in the sense that we will still want stories that will still be important."

St. John Mandel thinks of writing a novel as putting together a puzzle. Of "Station 11," she said, "The project of that book was just thinking through, what do we long for, and miss, and try to recreate if all of the modern world falls away... We get together to tell stories and that's the thing that sustains us as people."

Following the lecture, Director of the Middlebury Climate Action Program and event organizer Minna Brown described the event as a powerful display of how our community can gather.

Efforts to engage students and community members with the author's work began in January, led by Brown and Associate Professor of Theatre Michole Biancosino. Biancosino taught "The Plays of Station 11" last spring, using the novel and its HBO television adaptation to "provide a study of theatrical literature through an interrogation of the specific ways live performance and the human body inform meaning in text-based theatre," according to the course description.

"It definitely resonated with all of us on a variety of levels," said Vermont Book Shop owner Becky Dayton, where one group met during J-Term to discuss the novel. "And our conversation was rich with observation and insight."

"As a teacher/reader, I like how the story is mostly post-pandemic, but it's not a zombie-riddled, starving, violent world," said Middlebury Union High School English teacher Cathy Stoddert. "Mandel's world is realistic, about human relationships and nourishment, not mere sustenance and survival."

Biancosino described talking about St. John Mandel's work in different settings, from college classes to local libraries, local bookshops and high school classes, and creating a sense of community that goes beyond that one moment of discussion. "There is power and possibility in getting into rooms together and discussing a work of art or literature. It's an act of hope to engage with each other through discourse and genuine curiosity," she said.

Spoiler alert: "Station 11" ends with a conversation about history and how older generations may or may not make the choice to educate post-pandemic children about the 'before' world. The event was a testament to how St. John Mandel's work connects readers and thinkers of any age, allowing them to receive the author's assertion that at the forefront of human needs is the importance of gathering to create and discuss art.

COURTESY PHOTO

Author Emily St. John Mandel and Professor Megan Mayhew-Bergman speak onstage at Wright Theater.

Beyonce's boots were made for strutting

By CATHERINE GOODRICH

Arts & Culture Editor

During an otherwise unremarkable third quarter of Super Bowl LVIII, Beyoncé announced a forthcoming album, identified as "Act II," to be released on March 29. The Queen used a cheeky Verizon ad appearance to prove the internet can "B broken" when she said the commercial's closing words: "Release the new music!"

The Monday after the Super Bowl, I belted "Texas Hold 'Em" with a hearty alto twang I've perfected over the years. Country music has played an important role in my college experience.

I wasn't innately drawn to the genre while growing up in my home state of Alabama, though its cultural consequence permeated my childhood. My first cat's name was Reba, my dad would sing "Amarillo by Morning" to me and my brothers most nights before bed, and there's a prodigious Elvis-angel that tops my family's Christmas tree each year. Despite my surroundings, I scorned country, folk and blues music as being too down-home for my refined young taste, and I resented being in a state thousands of miles from the esteem of places like New York and Los Angeles.

In the second grade, the first album I downloaded on my iPod Touch was Beyoncé's 2008 hit "I Am... Sasha Fierce," which rocked my world and catalyzed my unabashed love for pop. Beyoncé was the greatest influence on my understanding of popular culture and remains my favorite artist to this day. Her image and body of work feature unparalleled cultural literacy — she is nothing if not referential to and reverent of the preexisting artistry that informs her craft.

2022's "Renaissance" is a testament to the artist's love and knowledge of dance, house and R&B, featuring collaborations with titans like Grace Jones and Big Freedia to celebrate and continue the tradition of 1970s Black and queer musical stylings. Beyoncé's cultural expertise shines amid a contemporary pop music industry that prioritizes commercial appeal over creative adroitness.

Over February break, my younger brother and I discussed Beyoncé's rumored turn to country music. My brother, Andrew, expressed his trepidation, to which I replied, "When has she ever steered us wrong?"

I can empathize with Andrew's hesitation as someone who didn't "like" country music until my first year at Middlebury. In 2020, as I was adjusting to the vastly different social and physical climate from where I grew up, songs by artists like Dolly Parton, The Chicks, Patsy Cline, Tanya Tucker and Loretta Lynn became totems I held on to remind me where I'm from and who I am. The Southern women I heard in my headphones were surrogates for my mom, grandmother, aunts, cousins and friends for whom I was homesick. To be a Southern woman is to have integrity, class and great humor — qualities that Beyoncé also demonstrates in spades.

I think my brother, many of Beyoncé's fans and especially her critics are coming to grips with the relevance of country music and their preconceived notions of both the genre and Bey herself. To many, country music is the tacit recommendation of beer, denim and white patriotism. There is a longstanding cultural discomfort surrounding the genre, which I would venture to say is reflective of the longstanding discomfort surrounding the American South.

Despite Beyoncé's frequent referral to her connection with and pride in her hometown of Houston, the culture at large often forgets that Beyoncé's work is representative of Southern artistic excellence. I believe many of her fans would prefer to view Beyoncé as having moved on from the South into a higher-brow, urban-centric standard of artistry.

"Beyoncé's foray into country is something I've been waiting for since her collaboration with The Chicks on 'Daddy Lessons,'" said longtime Beyoncé and country fan Stephanie Crocker '24. "It's unfortunate for her to already be receiving pushback from the country community, but listeners should remember where this genre originated."

COURTESY PHOTO/BEYONCÉ

Beyonce released two songs from her forthcoming album "Act II" in early February.

Those contesting Beyoncé's approach to country now and back in 2016 have been reminded by writers like Taylor Crumpton that Beyoncé has always been country. A conversation about genre conventions that situates Beyoncé as an interloper is trite and beside the point. The question at hand is not, "Is Beyoncé really country?" but rather, "Is country really Beyoncé?" To which I would answer, I sure hope it's about to be.

The two lead singles from "Act II," "Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages," are prime forerunners that signal Beyonce's commitment to her roots and to championing the crucial but oft-overlooked Black influence on the country genre. "Texas Hold 'Em" plays like a modern hoedown with its uptempo beat and soulful vocals. Beyoncé is no stranger to a stomp-and-holler, danceable track as seen in her previous hit "Daddy Lessons." The track's impressive banjo and viola riffs are played by Rhiannon Giddings, who has long advocated for the recognition and appreciation of Black country musicians. The lyrics bring levity to the rugged realities of the South. Tornados and heat waves aren't all beer and skittles, but for Beyonce, they are no reason not to hit the floor.

Where "Texas Hold 'Em" offers a distraction from hardship, "16 Carriages" is a rich indulgence of the struggles that come with a high-profile career. The track is an outstanding reconciliation of the bravado found on songs like "Bow Down" and "Diva" with the resentment of fame detailed on the hit "Pretty Hurts." Beyonce's veteran industry status has finally allowed her to belt out a reflection on the life of normality she missed out on and mourn the childhood of a girl who grew up too soon. The line "at 15, the innocence was gone astray" is a beautiful antidote to 2008 "Diva" and its line, "Since 15 in my stilettos, been struttin' in this game." Though both sentiments ring deeply true to Beyoncé's career, it's immensely gratifying for the artist to occupy a moment where she can deliver a nuanced, full-bodied country ballad about the travails of her road to stardom.

If "Texas Hold 'Em" and "16 Carriages" are any indication of what's to come on "Act II," listeners can expect an album that asserts the merit and the Blackness of country music and will likely put a fine point on just how interconnected those two qualities are. With horses, sequined cowboy hats and boots baked into the aesthetic of "Renaissance," the road to a bottle-blonde, countrified "Act II" is paved with Beyoncé's signature cultural eloquence. As a longtime fan of Beyoncé and a more recent fan of country, I truly can't wait.

REEL CRITIC: "MAESTRO"

By JACK TORPEY

Arts & Culture Editor

He is only two films in, but Bradley Cooper seems to have already found his thematic sweet spot as a director. "A Star is Born," the 49-year-old actor's 2018 directorial debut, swept audiences away with its music-centric retelling of a classic Hollywood romance, making a movie star out of Lady Gaga and revealing Cooper as a multi-talented screenwriter, singer and filmmaker. The twelve-time Oscar nominee has once again set a love story against a musical backdrop, this time in "Maestro," a biopic about the relationship between American conductor and composer Leonard Bernstein and his wife, Chilean actress Felicia Montealegre.

This sophomore directing effort by Cooper trades in the powerhouse melodrama of its predecessor for a more critical look at the joys and sorrows of an exceptional couple over the course of their marriage. Such a change in storytelling style will likely keep it from becoming as instantly iconic as "A Star is Born," but Cooper's latest stands tall in its own right. Beautifully shot and movingly written and acted, "Maestro" is a poignant drama that asks its audience to remember the ultimate importance of being compassionate to one another.

The film opens on an elderly Leonard Bernstein (Cooper) being interviewed in his home. At this stage in his life, Bernstein is winding down a prolific career that made him one of the most popular musical figures in the United States and the first American conductor to receive international acclaim. During this particular interview, however, the classical music icon is not reflecting on his resume — he is reminiscing about his wife.

Felicia Montealegre (Carey Mulligan), an actress who rose to prominence on Broadway in the 1940s, was Bernstein's closest friend and confidante through nearly three decades of marriage until her death from lung cancer at the age of 56. It is the story of that marriage that "Maestro" leaps back in time from its opening scene to tell, following Leonard and Felicia from their jubilant days of early love through trying times of familial discord and sickness. Crucial to its every moment is Leonard's reality as a gay man married to a woman, a tension that tests his and Felicia's bond and motivates much of the film's drama.

Reuniting with cinematographer Matthew Libatique after their dazzling collaboration on "A Star is Born," Cooper has crafted in "Maestro" the second major biopic of 2023 to brilliantly mix color and black-and-white photography. Unlike "Oppenheimer," which repeatedly cuts between the two visual modes throughout its three-hour running time, Cooper's film splits it roughly down the middle. The first half is presented in nostalgic black-and-white that evokes the innocence of Leonard and Felicia's courtship, lending certain scenes of playful romance the faint quality of a fairy tale. That impression is deepened by the stylistic flourishes that Cooper and Libatique pull off in this section of the film. In one scene, a free-spirited Felicia whisks Leonard away from a stuffy luncheon to go watch an imaginative performance of one of his stage compositions, a scenic change captured through an overhead tracking shot and an invisible edit so that the pair improbably dash straight out of a garden and into a theater.

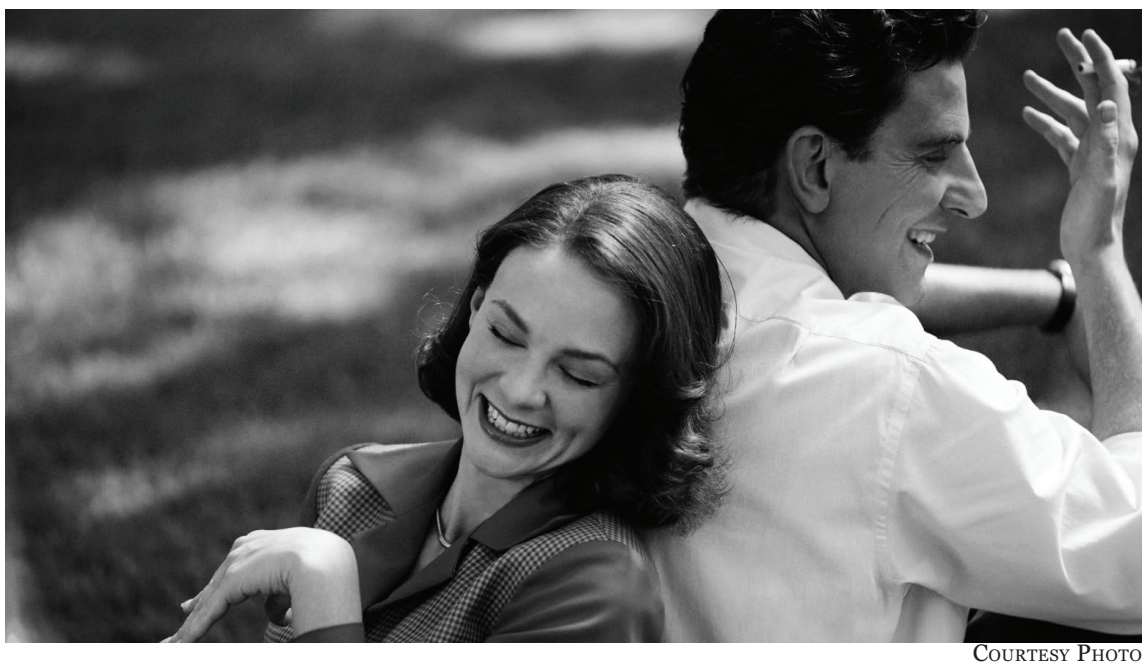
The fantasy of this image is fitting given the black-and-white section's lighthearted tone, but once "Maestro" switches to color, Cooper and Libatique rightly take a more grounded approach to visually exploring the conflicts that arise during the film's second half. Swooping camera movements are replaced by static shots, a standout being a long wide shot of a bitter argument between Leonard and Felicia that keeps the viewer as spatially distanced from the couple as they are emotionally from one another. The scene is representative of the film's dominant visual identity, highlighting the careful composition and restrained cutting that give "Maestro" its appealingly deliberate cadence.

Within the film's still, uninterrupted frames, Cooper and Mulligan are free to let their talents loose and bring their characters vividly to life. Leonard is played by an utterly committed Cooper, whose transformative, decades-spanning performance chronicles the man's emotional journey as an artist and husband. He introduces Leonard as a young, lively musician eager to embrace the opportunities opening up before him in his career and love life. But as the years pass, and the affairs that Leonard pursues to realize his sexuality take a toll on his and Felicia's marriage, Cooper mellows out to reflect his naturally charismatic character's dimming spirit.

That is, until the six-minute take of the actor wildly conducting the London Symphony Orchestra's rendition of Gustav Mahler's "Resurrection" symphony. A show-stopping set piece that required six years of training to execute, the scene showcases Cooper's extraordinary emulation of Leonard Bernstein's musical virtuosity, making it the pinnacle of his performance and "Maestro" itself.

The most amazing aspect of this orchestral scene is that Cooper is not the one who delivers its most powerful moment — that credit is owed to Mulligan. As Felicia, she surprises Leonard at the concert after a fight had caused them to cease speaking and, embracing him during the applause, speaks a line of loving consolation that moves them both to tears. It is an act of humility and grace that distills who this woman is, and Mulligan excels at animating that characterization. The actress begins her portrayal by expressing the youthful Felicia's endearment towards Leonard and her optimism for their future together. Affecting in this early passage of the story, Mulligan only becomes more impactful as the drama darkens, revealing a crescendoing performance that culminates in a heartrending depiction of her character's fatal illness in the film's final act.

Lying in bed with her adult daughter (Maya Hawke) wrapped in her arms, Felicia, nearing death, tells her child what life has taught her: "All anyone needs is to be sensitive to others. Kindness. Kindness. Kindness." She and Leonard fell in love, hurt one another and drifted apart, then came back together when each needed the other most. From walking that path of shared pain and healing, Felicia learned that happiness and peace are founded upon compassion, a lesson that "Maestro" tenderly imparts to its audience in a cinematic biography that surely makes its subjects smile.



COURTESY PHOTO

Leonard Bernstein (Cooper) and Felicia Montealegre (Mulligan) lean against each other in a romantic scene in "Maestro."

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SQUASH HAS STRONG SHOWING AT CHAMPIONSHIPS

By JONATHAN BUCHOLZ
Contributing Writer

This past weekend, the Middlebury men's and women's squash teams traveled to Philadelphia for the College Squash Association Divisional Team Championships. Both teams narrowly missed out on qualifying for the top bracket of the tournament, which is reserved for the top 12 teams, and competed in the second tier of the competition.

The women's team earned the top seed in the Kurtz Cup and narrowly bested a resilient Bates College team in the quarterfinals. In the next round, the Panthers fell one step short of the finals, losing in an upset to Williams College, whom they had beaten in regular season play.

Even though Captain Maya Bardorf described losing to Wiliams as hard and sad, she said, it only showed how much the team supports one another.

"Also, it was such a close and good match and everyone performed well, so that's honestly the best you can ask for," she said.

Despite coming home without a trophy, this was one of the women's squash team's most successful years in recent memory. Heading into the championships, the team was ranked 13th nationally, a ranking the team has not reached since 2013. During regular season play, they only lost once to another NESCAC team and had nine wins against nationally ranked opponents.

Bardorf said this season was her most positive thus far, both in terms of how well they did and how close-knit the team was.

"We just kept surprising ourselves. We treated this season like we were underdogs, but we were actually just a really solid team, and I think our regular season shows that," she told The Campus.

This year's squad has demonstrably improved from the team the Panthers fielded last year. Not only did they move up from the third to the second division in the College Squash Association Divisional Team Championships, but they did so by leaps and bounds, only missing out on the premier level of the tournament by one spot.

COURTESY PHOTO

Caleb Boateng '26 lined up at the #3 slot at the CSA Championships.

"I was really proud to be on a team with such great people and that as a senior it was really great to finish my time playing squash at Midd with our best season yet," Captain Eva Finney '24 wrote in a message to The Campus. "I have never been on a team that is this competitive with a group of people who still have so much fun together and make the most of everyone win and loss."

The women's squash team is well positioned to only improve from here next season. While they will lose captains Bardorf and Finney, as well as the recently graduated Kieran Suntha '23.5, the roster is full of talented young players. The three players who slotted in at number one this season for the Panthers — Lindsey Burnham '26, Izzy Ronda '26 and Sabrina Schwarz '27 — are all underclassmen with several years remaining to improve.

The men's side enjoyed a similarly strong campaign, qualifying for the Hoehn Cup as the 18th ranked team. The Panthers squared off against the University of Rochester in the quarterfinals, where they fell in a 6–3 defeat. In spite of the playoff loss, captain Kian Lalji '24 was proud of the way the team played, particularly in the first half of the season.

"This season started off really, really strong," Lalji said. "We beat a lot of teams that were close matches in the past and we just annihilated them."

After stringing together a six-game win streak at the start of the season, however, the squad struggled to find wins in the latter half. In late January, the 10–2 Panthers suffered their first consecutive losses of the season to MIT and Tufts University. The latter served as a wake-up call to the team, as they fell to their rivals 0–9.

"After the Tufts match, we were on the bus and we were all planning out how we were going to double session everything," said David Zhao '27, a first year player who started in 17 games this season.

The agony of defeat was further compounded by a fledgeling rivalry with Tufts, who have historically outranked the Panthers. A week before competing in the College Squash Association Divisional Team Championships, Middlebury met Tufts again in the quarterfinals of the NESCAC tournament. Despite a second loss, the closer score increased the team's confidence going into the national championships.

"Our biggest driving factor was that we played Tufts the weekend before, which is a team that made it to A's, and we lost 5–4 against them, so we were pretty confident going into the tournament," said Charlie Clifford '27, another of the team's five first years.

Despite this increased confidence, the Panthers found themselves against a formidable foe in Rochester, and they ultimately lost in quarterfinal action. The team can hold their heads high despite the loss, however, as Rochester would ultimately prove to be the best team at the Hoehn Cup.

Similarly to the women's team, there is a lot of hope for the future on the men's side. The men will only lose three seniors for next season: captains PK Keller '23.5 and Alex Stimpson '23.5 graduated earlier this month, and Lalji will follow in May.

"I'm really excited for what the team can bring next year when we only lose [Keller] out of the top nine and the other two co-captains who aren't playing top nine right now," Lalji said. "So I think that we have a really good chance of being a strong team and a contender for doing better."

Both men's and women's squash teams saw major improvements this season and could pan out to be some of Middlebury's most exciting teams for years to come.

Editors' Note: Managing Editor Katie Futterman '24 contributed reporting.

Women's swimming & diving makes a splash at NESCAC championships, earning their highest finish in nearly a decade

By LIZZY LAWRENCE
Contributing Writer

Last Thursday, swimmers and fans alike buzzed with excitement at the Middlebury College Natatorium as the women's swimming and diving team kicked off the first of four consecutive days of racing at the NESCAC championships.

The #19 ranked Panthers finished the regular season with an impressive 5–2 overall score and ended their season with a splash on Sunday night, securing a third-place spot behind Tufts University and Williams College — their highest finish since the 2014-2015 season.

Hosting the championships in Middlebury's own natatorium not only gave the team more fans, but also a boost of momentum in a highly competitive meet. The energy was electric as the first competitors dove into the 800-yard freestyle relay, an event that scored Middlebury 72 points and left them in third place after the first day of competition. Throughout the weekend, each Panther battled in the pool to qualify for night sessions and maintain the team's standing.

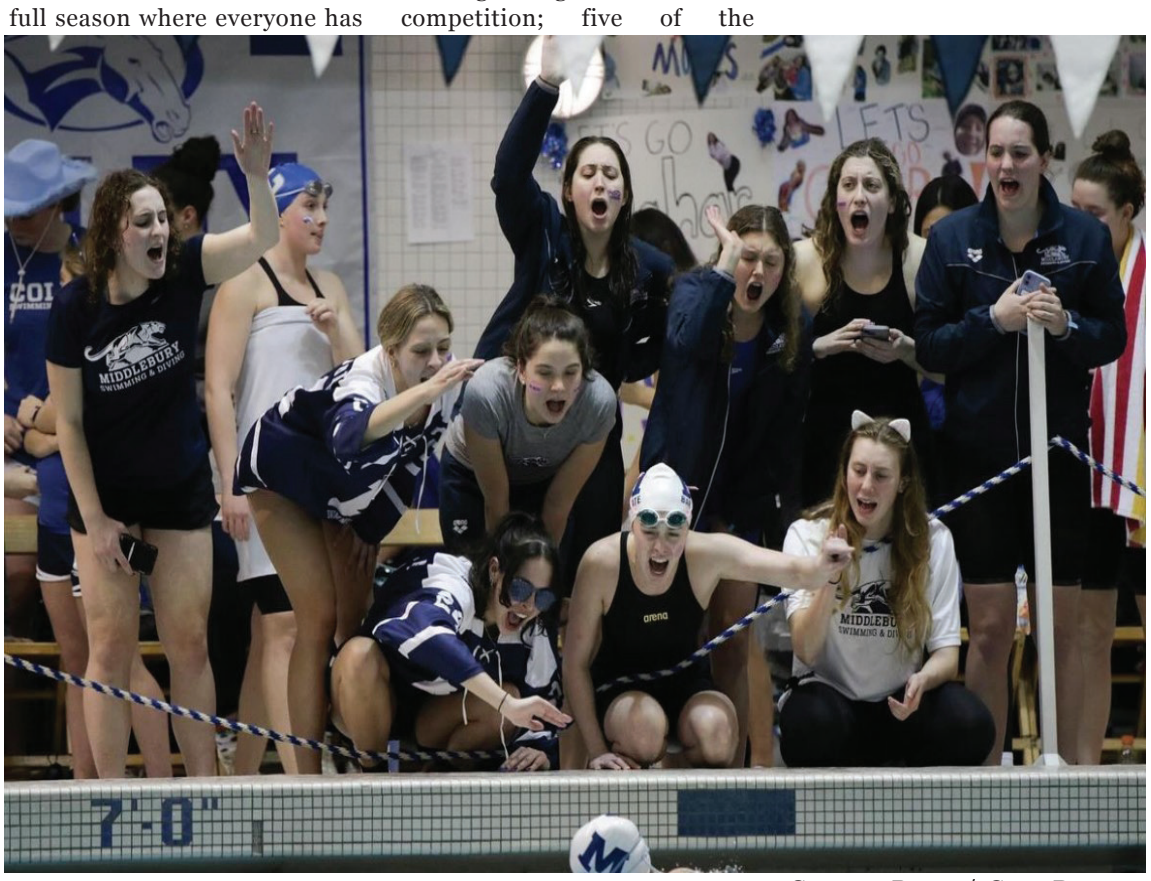
Top individual finishes for the Panthers included Chloe Katz '25 in the 1000 and 1650-yard freestyle, Maddy Reid '25 in the 100-yard backstroke, Louise Hay '24 in the 200-yard freestyle and Fayanne Salzburg-Smith '27 in the 200-yard breaststroke.

"It's been unreal, honestly — having a big parent section and student section supporting us, having our men's team members there to time and help work the meet but also an extra set of voices to help cheer on has been great," Hay, a captain of the team, told The Campus. "We obviously feel really comfortable in this pool and racing in it so I think that's helped us a lot and it really has been a great environment to help boost us forward."

While home-pool advantage may have given the team an extra boost, it formed just one part of their success. Hay's co-captain Hailey Vandenbosch '24 credited the impressive finish to the team's rigorous training all season leading up to the NESCAC meet.

"What you're seeing isn't luck — it's a culmination of really hard work and it's really exciting to get to see that payoff for the whole team," Vandenbosch said. "Behind this really great meet is two months of preseason hard work and then a number of months of the full season where everyone has been putting in their effort day in and day out."

After finishing fifth at NESCACs last winter, the team's third place finish this time around was especially striking in light of the fierce competition; five of the participating teams hold national rankings in the College Swimming Coaches Association of America's top 25 (Williams #4, Tufts #9 and Bates College #21), making a third-place spot no small feat.



COURTESY PHOTO / COLIN BOURQUE

The women's swim team finished third in the NESCAC for the first time since 2015.

Shea Brams ’26, Jack Christner ’25 lead Middlebury nordic ski team to success at Williams Carnival

By JACK MCGUIRE
Sports Editor

COURTESY PHOTO / JACK CHRISTNER

Middlebury Ski has finished fourth at its last two carnivals.

Trudging through the wind and snow at Prospect Mountain in Woodford, Vt., the Middlebury Nordic ski team added another impressive performance to their season at the Williams Carnival this past weekend. Both the men’s and women’s teams were runners up in the 3 x 5K relay race, helping Middlebury place fourth overall at the competition.

The Williams carnival was just a continuation of the enormous success the Nordic team has had this year. In all five carnivals to date this season, the nordic team has played a major role and has yet to finish outside the top five. The team has been especially propelled by two skiers: Shea Brams ’26 and Jack Christner ’25.

Brams and Christner have dominated the competition this season, with each garnering an Eastern Intercollegiate Ski Association Nordic Skier of the Week award. Brams earned her award on Feb. 7 following an impressive performance at the Harvard Carnival, where she won the 15K mass start and came in fourth place in the 7.5K free skate. Meanwhile, Christner won his accolade a week later after his performance at the Dartmouth Carnival where he finished second in the 15K mass start and fifth in the freestyle sprint.

In addition to winning Nordic Skier of the Week, Brams has been consistently one of the best skiers in the Eastern Intercollegiate Ski Association all season. She has finished on the podium four times this season and has three event victories.

Brams credits the work she and the rest of the team have put in all year as the root of her success. Starting in May of 2023, the team has completed 15-25 hours of training a week including strength training, roller skiing and running track.

“Every person values how they are going to perform,” Brams said. “Every person cares a lot about training.”

Perhaps surprising based on her success, Brams has had a somewhat unique path to Division One skiing. While many DI skiers are from mountainous ski towns in the west or from rural pockets of Vermont, Brams hails from the Boston suburb of Belmont, Mass. Because of where she grew up, Brams got her start in Nordic skiing on mostly man made snow on a golf course.

“I think people who come from the West, where mountains are gigantic, might view Middlebury mountains as hills,” Brams said. “But for me, coming from a place that’s full of traffic and city, this is like a dream.”

Christner does not share Brams’ experience of developing as a skier in a suburban area — he grew up in Ripton, Vt. — but, just like her, he has steadily been successful in Eastern Intercollegiate Ski Association skiing this season. In ten races this season, Christner secured a top ten spot in eight of them.

In his third year of collegiate skiing, Christner feels that his years of experience are paying off and leading to good results.

“As you get older in skiing, you get more confidence in your race ability,” he said. “You know who everyone is and how the system works.”

Christner, Brams and the rest of the Nordic team will compete at the Middlebury Carnival this weekend at the Rikert Outdoors Center. After not hosting a carnival last year, Middlebury’s Carnival will serve as the Eastern Intercollegiate Ski Association Championships this year and give Middlebury skiers a long awaited opportunity to compete in front of their classmates.

Women’s basketball still bouncing in NESCAC tournament

By ETHAN VASHEL
Contributing Writer

This past Saturday, the Middlebury Women’s Basketball team (17–8) beat Amherst College 59–48 in the quarterfinals of the NESCAC tournament.

In the first half of the game, Middlebury trailed the Mammoths 26–18, and a nervous murmur echoed through the walls of Pepin Gymnasium. The Panthers had come out of the gates flat, and their excellent 2023-24 season was in critical danger of coming to an abrupt end.

However, something Head Coach KJ Krasco said to inspire the team during halftime must have clicked, because Middlebury was a new team in the second half.

“We thought we were in a decent position because we played a bad half, but only trailed by eight,” Bethany Lucey ’24 said. “We had to get back to playing lockdown defense and trust that our shots would begin to fall.”

The Panthers slowly but surely worked themselves back into the game, playing quality defense and relentlessly attacking the offensive glass. The offensive rebounds turned into critical points thanks to multiple three-point shots from guard Calie Messina ’26. As the clock wound down in the third quarter, Lucey banked in a three-point shot to give the Panthers a 36–34 lead, their first of the game.

The fourth quarter was even worse for Amherst, as Middlebury began to consistently connect on their shots. The team had an impressive field goal percentage of 50% in the fourth quarter. The Panthers did not look back and controlled the play throughout the rest of the quarter, coasting to victory. The win marked an impressive comeback, aided by Middlebury outscoring Amherst in the second half by 19 points.

Alexa Mustafaj’s ’25 18 points in the contest propelled her into the record books as Middlebury’s all-time leading scorer. While this is no small accomplishment, the victory was made even more impressive by the way Middlebury functioned as a team. In addition to the offensive and defensive rebounding, a number of slick passes effectively set up open Panther baskets.

Also of note, Middlebury had diversity in scoring at key moments in the game. Messina scored a game high 19 points, Lucey hit an important three pointer, Brooke Collins ’26 added two huge baskets down the stretch and Augusta Dixon ’24.5 scored a momentous “and 1” late in the game.

Middlebury will continue to require clutch performances next weekend when they travel to Brunswick, Maine, take on #11 ranked Bowdoin College in the NESCAC semifinals. Middlebury lost to Bowdoin in mid-January 68–65.

“They’re a well rounded team. They have a couple of post players who had good games against us the first time around,” Lucey said.

The Panthers are currently seeking their second appearance in a NESCAC championship game, a feat they have not accomplished since the 2001-02 season when they finished as the NESCAC runner up.

The stakes certainly are high, but the team is focused on just playing basketball. “We all have experience in high pressure games, so the mindset is to just take the game one play at a time,” Lucey said.

With a win, Middlebury would play for the NESCAC title the next day, as well as a bid to the NCAA tournament.

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Calie Messina ’26 scored a team-leading 19 points in the Panthers’ quarterfinal win.

LIV, LOVE, LOCAL: DOWNHILL BREAD

Liv, Love, Local is a column highlighting local businesses of Vermont, especially cafés and restaurants in the Middlebury area. Through interviews with owners, I want to highlight the specific successes and challenges that come along with small business ownership in Vermont, the hard work owners and employees put into these businesses, and how these spots serve as places to build community and connection.

OLIVIA MUELLER / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Downhill Bread has developed from an at-home btking operation based out of Bezamat's home kitchen to a full-time endeavor from a commercial kitchen on Bristol's Main Street.

By OLIVIA MUELLER
News Editor

Since its founding in 2020, Downhill Bread has been building momentum in Bristol, Vt.

In establishing Downhill Bread, Brooks Bezamat evolved his bread and pastry business, from an at-home baking operation based out of his Lincoln, Vt. kitchen to a full-time endeavor with a commercial kitchen on Main Street in Bristol. Bezamat serves bread and pastries three days a week in addition to a fuller spread of breakfast and coffee options on Wednesday mornings.

Bezamat's friend and collaborator Madeleine Meller has also come on board to take on a variety of non-baking tasks, including front-of-house operations and deliveries.

Bezamat has been a chef for 17 years, splitting his time between catering and restaurant work with bread baking initially as just a side passion. Word of Bezamat's delicious baking spread organically as customers at places where Bezamat sold his products developed a taste for his crusty, hearty loaves, and began to seek it out.

The name "Downhill" came from Bezamat's passion for skiing.

"It started out of his kitchen, then he started supplying it to general stores," Meller explained.

Bezamat first began selling bread to Beaudry's Store in Huntington, Vt. and Lincoln General Store in Lincoln, Vt. respectively, before expanding to also selling bread directly out of Tandem — a shared, mixed-use commercial kitchen space on Bristol's Main Street — and other wholesale accounts, including the Middlebury Co-Op, and seasonal farmer's markets and farm stands.

According to Bezamat, Chad Robertson's popular bread making book "Tartine" was an inspiration for base bread recipes, but he has adjusted those recipes substantially to create bakes with their own unique characteristics.

"I tweaked a lot of things and did what I like," he said. "Method is a big part of it too. That comes with time and it's personal preference. I make the bread I like to eat."

Through trial and error, Bezamat has landed on popular flavor combinations beyond just classics, such as a fennel sesame loaf. Despite being a one-baker operation, Downhill has a plethora of bread options on bake days from plain to poppy, bagel to baguette.

While being the sole baker allows for closer quality control, the natural limit on production has made it difficult to scale up while maintaining work-life balance, Bezamat said. Meller assists with deliveries, breakfast service and other non-baking needs, but Bezamat handles all baking operations.

"We only have a certain amount of oven space. So there's a real cap on how much bread we can make every day," Meller said. "How big can we get without sacrificing quality?"

The summer marked an important lesson in juggling growing demand from a variety of accounts, as more farm stands reached out to stock Downhill Bread than in other seasons. The demand for small volumes of bread from customers at many delivery locations placed a major strain on one baker with a small team.

The impact of this on Bezamat's work-life balance inspired a shift in strategy moving forward in 2024 as he looks toward sustainable growth without compromising the quality that customers seek.

"The goal is to have more bread sell at fewer locations," he added. "Keeping my max amount and then also just knowing when to rein it in, not overextend."

Bezamat and Meller plan to continue supplying a growing account at the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-Op, where they supply loaves on Wednesdays and Saturdays, selling wholesale at Tandem and still providing to other small local accounts as is sustainable.

Bristol patrons can also find Downhill loaves and canneles stocked at Minifactory, a café located just a few doors down from the Tandem kitchen on Main Street in Bristol.

Bezamat also plans to continue adjusting the product mix. When he first started Downhill, he made more pastry products, including eclairs, tarts and other baked goods. While canneles have remained, he has shifted away from some of the more labor-intensive pastries in order to prioritize bread and bagels and fulfill wholesale orders.

Despite the challenges of early mornings and finding balance, Bezamat and Meller have gotten momentum from the community support they have received.

"Feedback from the community… to me is the biggest success. Just knowing how much people love the bread," Meller said. "It's just so nice to hear that because [Bezamat] puts so much effort into making it."

Meller experienced the community hype firsthand, trying Bezamat's bread before even meeting him and deciding to come onboard. A friend shared a loaf with Meller while they were at a sugar shack, she said, and her intrigue was there after the first bite.

"It's kind of hard to get…with some mysterious maker in Lincoln, who sometimes sells at the general store, but you have to be on the list," Meller recalled her friend explaining the original Downhill Bread business model. "I was like, I have to meet this guy."

Bezamat and Meller both appreciate the face-to-face interactions and opportunity to connect more deeply with customers during the slower winter months.

"He's up extremely early baking bread but for the first few hours of the morning, people are coming in, they're getting warm bread and they're talking to him," Meller said.

Bezamat described the business as having been a way to make good friends and immerse himself in the Vermont community. "When I'm awake enough we can have a conversation. And it's great," he added.

"I just feel so lucky that we landed here and that I think that both of us really care about contributing to the community in a variety of ways," Meller said.

Downhill Bread's Wednesday morning expanded breakfast service is an effort to show up for the town, Bezamat said. He recommends trying the "crispy pig" terrine breakfast sandwich, which uses all parts of the pig to create a sandwich that pairs tenderly fatty, melt-in-your mouth meat on a fresh Downhill English muffin with egg, arugula, mustard and other herbs and spreads.

According to Meller, Bezamat's goal with Downhill Bread is simply to create an authentic and honest product. Switching to organic, phosphate-free Milanaise flour sourced from Quebec, while more expensive as a unit cost than King Arthur Flour, is one such recent change reflecting this ethos.

"I think that things that are easier generally aren't as good, take shortcuts to be better. I don't always want things to be difficult, but to have them be really great," said Bezamat.

Downhill Bread is available at Tandem, located at 26 Main Street in Bristol on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., along with breakfast sandwiches and Little Seed Coffee served from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Wednesdays.

A REVOLUTIONARY PRESS: A LOCAL NONPROFIT AT THE INERSECTION OF ART AND ACTIVISM

By CHARLIE KEOHANE
Editor at Large

If you take a look at the dorm room walls of Middlebury students, chances are you might see some of John Vincent's colorful letterpress work. Vincent founded Revolutionary Press, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit printing press, in 2010, and aims to spread radical and revolutionary ideas. Since 2016, Revolutionary Press has raised $219,470 for numerous organizations dedicated to nonviolence and social justice.

Vincent, originally from the Washington D.C. area, has no formal art background. He worked in law enforcement in New Hampshire before returning to D.C. and serving in the National Guard for six years. In 1985, Vincent returned to New England and in 2000 he took over In the Alley Bookshop in Middlebury, where he first became acquainted with letterpress printing.

Prior to starting Revolutionary Press, Vincent — a voracious reader — enjoyed finding radical and revolutionary quotes and hanging them on the door of his bookstore. As he was closing the bookstore one day, someone came in and inquired about letterpress books. That interaction immediately piqued Vincent's interest, and from there he embarked on a journey to marry his love of finding inspiring words with art.

"I didn't know what it would be at the time because I had no real model to work off of. I just know what I wanted to do was print radical and revolutionary words to inspire people to do something creative around government and the way we run our country," Vincent said.

When asked why letterpress printing, Vincent said, "It seemed kind of tactile. It was real. It was something old." After closing the bookstore in 2007, Vincent was gifted his first printing press. He moved to Maine and began letterpress printing before returning to Vermont eight years ago. Today, he is based in New Haven, Vt.

Vincent's first printing project was the organization's mission statement, which borrows words from the Declaration of Independence, "Print and disseminate Radical & Revolutionary ideals to impel the People to Creatively Act on their Right and their Duty to alter or abolish the Present Form of Government and institute a New and more Humane Form of Self Governance."

To Vincent, it is important to have this mission be a guiding principle for all of his printing projects. Vincent finds inspiration organically, often through reading.

"I find the words by reading a lot. Not doing Google searches. I want to have it in context, so if someone asked me about it, I can say, well, you know, it actually comes from this piece," he said.

Some of Vincent's work is accompanied by a linocut: a stamp carved out of a sheet of linoleum. While Vincent dabbles in linocut, he primarily enjoys setting type. Many of the linocuts featured in prints are made by people who connect with Vincent's vision, including former and current Middlebury students.

Vincent has collaborated with artists who found Revolutionary Press at art markets or through word of mouth. "I've never really advertised it," he said. "There's no reason to advertise it. It's more of what the universe provides. Serendipity."

Gabby Chalker '24 heard about Revolutionary Press through mutual friends and started working with Vincent over J-Term. "It's a bit of a web of Middlebury students finding him and being interested in either his work or printmaking in general."

Chalker, who enjoyed printmaking in high school, said she is inspired by Vincent's dedication to social justice and resonated with the accessibility, beauty and messaging of Revolutionary Press' work.

"It's such a tangible example of true activism and community," she said.

When asked about his favorite piece, Vincent said, "It's always the one I'm working on." When I visited his studio in January, he was printing the poem "Calla Lilly," written by Spoon Jackson, a poet incarcerated in California. According to Vincent, a lot of the work the Press is doing currently is focused on issues of incarceration.

Revolutionary Press recently collaborated with Vermont Works for Women and Conversations on the Open Road on the art exhibition "Finding Hope Within: Healing & Transformation Through the Making of Art Within the Carceral System," which features work from incarcerated individuals in Vermont, Maine and Massachusetts.

Vincent often sources papers for his prints from the Peace Paper Project, "an international community-arts initiative that utilizes traditional papermaking as a form of trauma therapy, social engagement, and community activism," according to the organization's website.

Work is Paying Attention To What Matters Most
AHa!
aHA!
OCCUPY LOVE
LOVE IS THE ONLY FORCE CAPABLE OF TRANSFORMING AN ENEMY INTO A FRIEND
NOTHING I DO WILL CHANGE THE WORLD BUT THAT DOESN'T RELEASE ME FROM THE OBLIGATION TO TRY

CHARLIE KEOHANE / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

John Vincent crafts Revolutionary Press materials at his studio in New Haven, a colorful space brimming with different types, card stock and prints.

Vincent described printing on handmade paper as even more powerful than just printing on regular cardstock. "So I try to do that as much as possible," he added.

He hopes to get more involved with papermaking in the future.

Revolutionary Press prints, postcards and bookmarks are sold in-person locally and can be found downtown at The Vermont Book Shop. Vincent emphasized the importance of having in-person interactions and frequenting local businesses, such as his travels to local markets like Bristol's Art On Main.

Revolutionary Press also has a yearly subscription service, where individuals can make a donation ranging from $15-30 and get one to three prints per month in the mail. Vincent enjoys supporting the U.S. Postal Service and giving people a reason to get excited to check their mailboxes.

Currently, over 450 people are signed up for the subscription service.

Vincent looks forward to continuing his work and finding inspiration all around him.

"Thoughts about printing come to my mind through stuff that I'm reading," he said. "So I keep a lot of reading journals and mark up my own books. Sometimes, I'll stop reading and come right in here and work directly from that page, and I think I know exactly what it's going to look like. And then other times I'll write it down, it percolates, six months later, I think to myself, 'Wait a minute, I'm going to print this. I have an idea now for it.' Sometimes, it's a slow process, and other times, it's very immediate. I can never tell."

Addison County State's attorney facing misdemeanor DUI charge after responding to a crime scene while allegedly intoxicated

Continued From Page One

prompting the surrounding troopers to question her about her alcohol consumption that evening.

Vekos reportedly bumped into officers as they were gathered in the house investigating the crime scene's evidence, and was slurring her speech noticeably while asking questions. The misdemeanor charge occurred at the crime scene of the suspicious death of 44-year-old Stephen Nuciolo Sr. in Bridport on Jan. 24, according to reporting from the Addison Independent.

Other officers testified to her difficulty standing upright and walking in clear, straight lines while moving about the Bridport crime scene, and mentioned similar struggles of balance when moving from the police cruiser to the barracks.

After being questioned, Vekos admitted to consuming "one gin and tonic," but refused to undergo the standard field sobriety tests given to impaired drivers, at which point she was procedurally arrested by the Vermont State Police officers and transported to the state police barracks in New Haven, Vt.

Several days after her arrest, Vekos refused to meet in-person with law enforcement, writing in an email to law enforcement and state officials, "I do not feel safe around law enforcement," according to VTDigger.

On Monday, Feb. 12, Vekos was arraigned in court, presided over by Rutland Superior Court Judge Thomas A. Zonay, and pleaded not guilty to the misdemeanor DUI charge of driving under the influence. She was released on her own recognizance.

The press release from the Office of the Vermont Attorney General stated that a DUI #1 breaches 23 V.S.A. § 1201(a)(2), and the misdemeanor carries a possible sentence of two years in prison or a $750 fine.

During the arraignment, new details were brought to light about Vekos' conduct on the crime scene, revealing that Vekos used her scarf to mask her face and mouth during the investigation and that she commented on the "discretion" of the officers on-scene that were questioning her about her sobriety, according to the Addison Independent.

Multiple officers corroborated the evidence of Vekos' intoxication, and noted her refusal to provide a breath sample to a DataMaster machine — a blood alcohol content measuring device — while arrested at the New Haven Vermont State Police barracks.

While in court, Judge Zonay deemed fingerprints and photographs of Vekos unnecessary and moved the location of the case from Addison County to Chittenden County to prevent a conflict of interest between the prosecution of the case and the duties of Vekos' own office.

On Feb. 14, VTDigger reported that Vekos will be taking medical leave of absence before returning to her position as state attorney for Addison County.

Vekos' attorney David Sleigh told the press that she plans to re-enter her legal and professional duties when she is "fully grounded and up to the task," according to VTDigger.

Sleigh added that Vekos intends to work with law enforcement and state officials to "rebuild any trust that she lost."

Edgewater Gallery hosts musical brunch

By EDITH MAUCH
Staff Writer

Music, art and food filled Edgewater Gallery in downtown Middlebury during its second Musical Brunch. The gallery hosted community members along with some current and upcoming artists on display at the gallery on Feb. 10 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Liz Lebeau sang at the event, accompanied on classical guitar by Ken Pasiak.

"I was snacking on fresh cut fruit at the back of the gallery, admiring the works of a featured artist, Julia Jensen, when suddenly this beautiful voice filled the space with the opening of 'Ave Maria,'" Linda Mason-Smith '68, an attendee, recalled. "What a Sunday morning... a blah, gray February day outside, and inside all this color and music."

Heather Viens, a gallery assistant at Edgewater Gallery expressed her excitement at the turnout for the event, as people often do not come in unless they are specifically shopping for art.

COURTESY PHOTO / EDGEWATER GALLERY

Liz Lebeau sang and was accompanied on classical guitar by Ken Pasiak at Edgewater's Musical Brunch.

The gallery, which opened its first location in the historic Frog Hollow Alley in 2014 before expanding to another building on the historic Battell Block — both in downtown Middlebury — includes artists from across the U.S. and Canada.

"It is my job to think of creative ways to highlight the gallery's collection and draw people in to see it," said Manager of Edgewater Gallery Theresa Harris. "I love collaboration and especially the melding of different types of art forms. Music pairs beautifully with fine art and our gallery space lends itself nicely to music."

The great acoustics in the gallery space were part of the inspiration for the event, according to Harris. The first brunch was a jazz group, the most recent one was a classical duo of guitar and voice and the upcoming brunch in March will feature a Jazz Fusion group. Each also hosts an artist whose work is on display.

Edgewater has a number of exhibitions coming up. The 2024 season opened with a group exhibition called "Solitude." Harris said she enjoys group shows because they give the gallery the opportunity to display multiple artists at once, all reflecting variations of the same theme.

"The Edgewater is not a static environment. It is constantly changing what's on exhibit and how the works are being presented, i.e., what other artists might be shown at the same time as complimentary or perhaps in contrast," Mason-Smith said.

The gallery also has upcoming exhibitions of Vermont artists including Jane Davies, Kate Gridley, William Hoyt, and Rory and Woody Jackson.

"I've been fortunate to have my work represented at Edgewater since their early days. They've done a lot of groundwork to develop a strong following over the years and I've been lucky to be a part of it, from participating in art fairs with them to showing in their other satellite galleries elsewhere that have emerged from time to time," Sara Katz, one of the artists who is currently on display, told The Campus.

Katz also described her love of Middlebury as a small, local town and her relationship with Edgewater's staff.

"Edgewater staff has always been great to work with, supportive and interested, and so talented in their own right too," she said.

Dale Najarian's work "Winter Compositions" in collaboration with Jim Westphalen, was on display in early January through mid-February. Narajian similarly spoke of the meaningful nature of displaying work at Edgewater.

"Edgewater Gallery has such a presence in Middlebury and it's an honor to have my work in the gallery for the community to see," she said.

If you missed the last brunch, be sure to check out the Jazz Fusion event on March 16, with artist Bonnie Baird. Information about future Edgewater events and current artists on display can be found on the gallery's website.

GALENTINE'S DAY CELEBRATION CELEBRATES WOMEN AND NON-BINARY FRIENDSHIP AND BUSINESS OWNERS

By JULIA PEPPER
Senior Local Editor

Adventure Dinner and Atria Collective, formerly known as WomenSafe, hosted their annual Galentine's Day Celebration, a culmination of a long standing partnership that raises funds for Atria Collective. Sixteen women-owned businesses set up shop at Vergennes Opera on Feb. 17 from 5 to 8 p.m. Any gender was welcome to come celebrate.

Attendees shopped at the various vendors, had food from Louisa Sienko's Homemade with Love, drinks made by the Adventure Dinner staff and bought raffle tickets which funded Atria Collective in support of their mission to end gender-based violence in Addison County.

The raffle grand prizes included an overnight stay for two at Hotel Vermont in Burlington, a $200 dollar Adventure Dinner Gift card and a $100 Haymaker Gift Card.

This Galentine's event first began in 2021, and has taken place every year since. The collaboration between Atria Collective and Sas Stewart, the founder of Adventure Dinner, dates back several years prior.

Before founding Adventure Dinner in 2020, Stewart co-founded Stonecutter Spirits, a Vermont spirits company, in 2014. Following a few years at Stonecutter, Stewart came up with the idea of hosting an event celebrating friendship, specifically female and non-binary friendship.

"In a world where we're so often pitted against one another, there are these beautiful parts of celebrating the love and support we can have for one another. That was where the idea [for the original event] came from, and I wanted it to be something that benefited our community," Stewart said.

Partnering with Atria Collective was a natural next step toward this goal. Stewart sought a partnership that aligned with the principle of supporting women and the most vulnerable people in the community, and also wanted to draw more attention and support to Atria Collective throughout Vermont.

The collaboration has endured, and ultimately led to the Galentine's Celebration.

"For this type of event, we really play host and organizer," Stewart said. "We curate the people who are vendors at the event, we try to reach out to lots of different types of small businesses owners, and we actually bring in someone else to do the food component."

She added that Adventure Dinner's biggest contribution to the event came in the form of helping to organize and publicize. "Our network is so different from Atria's network, so it's more powerful if we focus on harnessing the community that we're a part of to bring attention to what Atria is doing," Stewart said.

Elyssa Boiselle, executive director of Atria Collective, echoed that idea.

"Adventure Dinner does most of the leg work by hosting the event and we at Atria Collective are so incredibly appreciative to be beneficiaries! It is a great fundraiser for us, and a great way to do outreach and share all the important work Atria Collective does," Boiselle wrote in an email to The Campus.

Atria Collective set a fundraising goal of $4,000 for the Galentine's Celebration. Over 140 people attended, and businesses included Alkame Co., a Burlington-based herbal tonics and elixirs business, Burlington-based Cravn Jewelry and Panton-based Wiggly Goat Farm.

Every ticket purchased for the event gave buyers entry into the raffle. Those who could not attend but wanted to participate could also purchase raffle tickets online.

Caroline Corrente, the owner of Haymaker Bun Company, is a current member of the Atria Collective Board, and has previously participated in other events with the collective.

Corrente explained that Stewart is a friend of hers, and got her involved in the collaboration several years ago. She took a larger role at Atria Collective when she joined the board in the summer of 2022, shortly after Roe v. Wade was struck down.

COURTESY PHOTO / ELYSSA BOISELLE

Over 140 people and and 16 women owned businesses were a part of the Galentine's Celebration at Vergennes Opera.

"I had a lot of rage and frustration over that," Corrente told The Campus. "I figure whenever I have feelings like that, it's best to do something about it. I wanted to get involved in an organization in the community that serves women and supports females."

The board has monthly meetings and responsibilities, including finance committees, planning yearly events like Galentines and annual appeals for donations around the holidays.

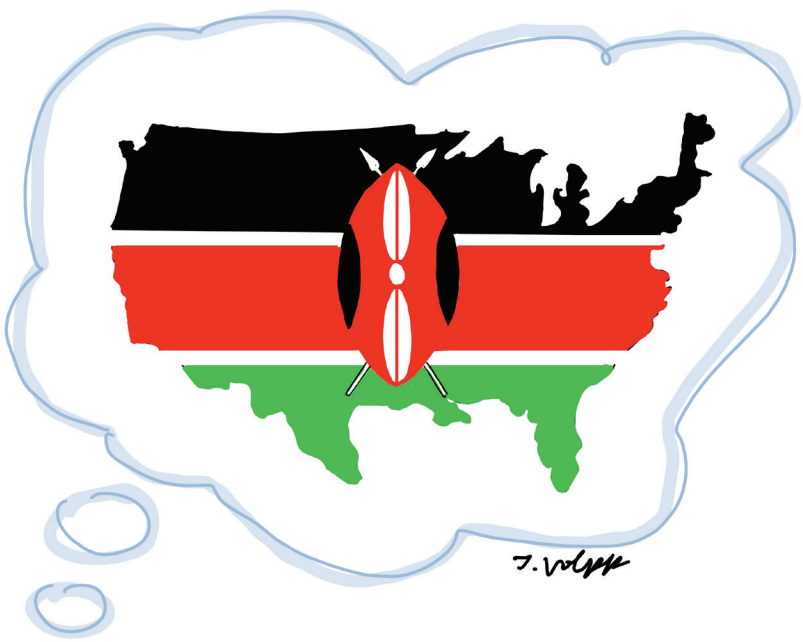
Corrente said she loves seeing the 150-200 women who show up and celebrate love, friendship and entrepreneurship.

"My favorite part is just seeing how many amazing, unique and innovative women that are vending there," she said. "It's cool to see how many diverse, women owned businesses are just right here in Addison County."

For Stewart, the event has its own special energy. "There is a joy, and a celebration, and a relaxation that is unparalleled," she said.

Boinselle echoed Stewart's sentiments about the spirit of a femme-dominated space."We love that this event supports women owned businesses that are femme identifying and femme loving. It is a great atmosphere to celebrate friendship and love for all people," she said.

MEAT, MILK, BLOOD AND… HOW IS MY CULTURE SEEN IN THE WEST?



Op-Ed

Vee Syengo *is a member of the class of 2025.*

A couple of months ago my housemates and I were having a house dinner with our house supervisor. Sitting around our tiny dining table, all the six of us, including the supervisor, went around the table introducing ourselves. It was an exhilarating moment to talk about the kind of foods that my housemates treasured and enjoyed. I remember how my Brazilian housemate talked charismatically about farofa, a quintessential Brazilian side dish made from cassava flour. When it was my turn, all I could think of was Pilau, a traditional Kenyan festive rice dish made with a blend of various spices and customizable to several flavors. However, the harmonious exchange took an unexpected turn when the supervisor, caught in the web of Western stereotypes, cast a skeptical eye my way. The trigger? My mixed heritage, predominantly Maasai.

"My cousin had quite the experience in Africa," she remarked, recounting a tale of goat testicles served to him. "Why are goat testicles served to guests?", she asked. This marked the genesis of a conversation that often haunts those of us whose cultures are consistently oversimplified and misunderstood. In essence, this encounter exemplifies the danger of a single story, where a singular narrative shapes perceptions and leads to misconceptions about the rich tapestry of diverse cultures.

As I navigated the awkwardness of that moment, it echoed countless similar instances where Western perspectives reduced the complexity of Maasai culture, and other African cultures, to a single, misleading narrative. A narrative that portrayed my people as vampire-like, blood-drinking nomads, fixated on the consumption of raw meat. It was this encounter that stirred a desire to unveil the rich tapestry of Maasai traditions, specifically exploring the intricacies between their traditional food practices and cultural identity.

The Maasai people have always been nomads since when Enkai created our ancestors. Traditionally, our food is mainly meat, milk and blood. But food isn't just food; it's deeply interconnected with our culture, tradition and our spiritual beliefs. The type of food that you're allowed to eat aligns perfectly with your role in the community as well as the stage of life that you're at.

Let's take a goat and see why, if it happens at all, guests are served with the testicles. To get the testicles, we need to slaughter the animal. The goat to be slaughtered, a senge (male goat) in this case, is escorted out of the barn to the bush where it will be slaughtered by men. At no point should a woman go near the slaughtering bush. There the men slaughter the animal and collect its blood. Blood can also be obtained by arrowing the jugular vein and patching it back up while the animal stays alive. The collected blood is served hot and raw as the slaughtering continues. Sometimes it's allowed to cool and clot. The clotted blood is then sieved with wild leaves and the liquid obtained is mixed with traditional herbs and animal fat forming a concentrated strong soup which is served hot. The blood can also be mixed with sour milk and fed to newly initiated and circumcised morans (warriors) to enhance healing and replenish the blood that's lost during circumcision. The same is given to women after childbirth to help with healing and lactation.

We're now close to serving our guests the testicles. After it's ready, the goat's head is boiled in a pot to provide goat head soup which provides protein, minerals like iron and zinc, and collagen from the bones and connective tissues. The head, tongue, ribs and liver are given to the elderly men. They are the head of the community, the spokespeople and also oversee diplomatic relations. The neck is served to morans who are strong enough to extract everything from the axis and atlas vertebrae. Symbolically, they are the neck of the community and will soon step in to replace the head. The back is reserved for child-bearing women and teenage girls. It is meant to strengthen their backs since they are the backbone of the community. The pelvis is meant for elderly women like grandmothers and mother-in-laws to strengthen their pelvis after all the hard work of birthing. Young boys, illayiok, are given the diaphragm to strengthen their torsos as they grow to throw spears with mighty thrusts. The intestines are given to women who cook it as an appetizer. No woman would want to miss this. Symbolically, women tend to digest and absorb a lot of daily issues that are often overlooked by everyone.

The ribs, which are the yummiest part of the goat, are reserved for adored and respected chiefs and elders. The ribs are roasted and grilled by young men at Orpul, slaughtering bush, who serve it to the elders in order of seniority, which is determined by age sets, from the oldest to the youngest. It's not just goat meat that embodies our cultural interconnectedness with food. Children, for instance, are raised with mostly milk, milk cream, and porridge. Usually they are not allowed to drink tea, which is reserved for adults and guests. Tea, or chai in Swahili, is the most common beverage offered to guests in most Kenyan households. What follows after varies from community to community depending on their culture and traditions. Where are the balls? You might be asking. Honestly I don't know, but I will tell you what I know. These culinary traditions, seemingly intricate and purposeful, underscore the interconnectedness between Maasai culture and their food practices. However, when viewed through the lens of a singular story, these rich customs are often reduced to sensationalized misconceptions. The symbolic significance attached to each part of the goat reflects the depth of Maasai cultural traditions, challenging oversimplified narratives that may perpetuate the misunderstanding of their way of life.

Months later after my encounter with my house's supervisor, I hosted a Kenyan dinner at that very table. It is then that I learnt that among the Kikuyu, goats' testicles are served for boys, among other tribes like the Luos and Luhyas, only men are allowed to eat the testicles, while it is meant for the elderly among the Kalenjin. The supervisor didn't entirely miss the point, she just knew that single story. As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says in her TED Talk "The danger of a single story": "That is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become."

The realization from the Kenyan dinner underscored the importance of recognizing the richness and diversity within cultures, dispelling the temptation to reduce entire communities, like the Maasai people, to oversimplified stereotypes. The Maasai, in particular, are not merely blood drinkers; they constitute a complex and multifaceted community with a rich and diverse culture, challenging the danger of perpetuating a single, misleading narrative.

Sarah Says: Goodbye To All That

Op-Ed

__Sarah Miller__ is a member of the class of 2024 and an Editor At Large for The Campus.

College promotes the rigidity of the circle of life as well as any nature documentary.

Each semester brings in a new crop of eager-eyed first years, pushing the seniors out into "the real world." Living in Forest Hall as a senior gives me an intimate window into my own obsolescence. At one end of the hall lurk the silent underclassmen while at the other end of the hall Baby Febs splay out into the hallway and make their first friends.

Since junior year, I've dreaded graduation. At first, vaguely, and then as the threat grew closer, with material urgency. In my family I've banned the use of the "g" word — graduation — and this past fall I wrote an op-ed outlining my existential anxieties. Yet, in the first days of my final semester, I've found myself feeling ready, if still deeply grieved, to leave Middlebury.

As much as my friends and I liked to joke (especially while standing waiting in line for Bar Night) about the super-senior Febs overstaying their welcome, their presence on campus provided me with a shield. In my classes and at parties, our senior class was still not the oldest grade on campus. Now that they are gone, the faces in the dining hall, around my seminar tables and wandering the club fair seem impossibly young. While I know it's rich for a twenty-two-year-old (even if just last week I was asked by a flight attendant if I was old enough to sit in the emergency row) to complain about feeling old, age is always relative. In just a few months, I will feel as young as I ever have, but for the next three months I will be deeply old.

In the American consciousness, college has come to be associated with one of our most potent myths: the best years of your life. Before entering college, adults of all ages used the opportunity to congratulate me on entering the most magical years of my life — the implication, of course, being that the magic came with a running clock. In other words, better enjoy the best years of your life before they're fast behind you.

I have loved college. During my time at Middlebury, I have learned from professors and peers that electrified me, fallen in love with nature, become a more independent and confident young woman, found community and formed deep friendships. Those very friendships are what make it hardest to say goodbye.

Though I will miss my hours cloistered in the English department, I am excited to push my passions further, to commit myself to a life as a writer, even if that doesn't look at first the way I might imagine. As much as I still love the stirrings of "Like A Prayer" and sticky Atwater floors, it's time for me to retire from parties sequestered in the same groups of people where I end the night by beating myself up for going home alone.

In three months, my life will be a lot messier and if that messiness frightens me, it also thrills me. Thanks to all I learned in the Green Mountains, my ambitions and my dreams have now grown beyond what Middlebury is capable of giving me. By design, college's promise of intellectual growth reaches a ceiling. I am most excited to graduate because, like most Middlebury students, I remain a voracious learner, and I believe that only by leaving Middlebury can I push that learning to its next step.

The lessons I learned at Middlebury will remain in the books I read and the ideas that lit up my brain's synapses, but the other great gift of my college career will be left on the campus green: my community.

It's easy for me to envy the baby Febs on my hallway just a little. They will never know the isolation of entering college with a 48 hour room quarantine, occupancy limits, the long winter walks to the Covid-19 testing center (otherwise known as the athletics center), socially distanced dining halls or how difficult it was to make friends behind a mask. Among all of this, perhaps the only bright side of entering college during the pandemic's peak is that I have never taken the integrality of human connection for granted.

Many of us chose Middlebury because of its promise of a "residential community." One of my friends likens it to a medieval commune where everyone's private business is designated to a public forum. At times Middlebury's residential community feels deeply claustrophobic, but, more often, it is a reminder of why I proselytize the virtues of a Middlebury education.

America is a lonely country, and only getting lonelier still. Just this past spring, the Surgeon General issued a report on the loneliness and isolation epidemic confronting the nation. You've probably at least glanced at the cottage industry of articles dedicated to exhorting the difficulties of forming friendships in adulthood.

With the specter of American adulthood loneliness hanging over me, I find myself with a new appreciation for the small totems of our community: exchanging smiles in line at Proctor Dining Hall, listening to my peers' opinions on modernism or just the act of studying when so many other students are mere feet away immersed in their own academic industry.

The onset of adolescence challenges us to differentiate ourselves. But, as Middlebury students, we are far more similar than the pretensions that divide us.

Last Friday was the celebration of my class's remaining 100 days, a number that fills me with vast dread. Held in Wilson Hall, the event began in a jostling, free-for-all where seniors used any elbow or other advantage to heap food on their plates. It was also one of the few moments the majority of the class of 2024 (and 24.5) shared the same roof. For a class with a virtual convocation, the sweat from the collective body heat seems almost a miracle.

As my final 100 days continue to wind down, I resolved to try and not torture myself with impossible bucket lists. There's no way to accomplish everything, and in the yawning gap between what we aimed to do and our smaller reality, there is a strange beauty. Instead, I commit myself to practice gratitude for this ephemeral community that will never again exist.

Sarah Miller / The Middlebury Campus

Sarah Miller '24 was a first year during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A Commitment to Diversity Before and After Matriculation

Susanna Schatz

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

The administration sent an email titled "Inclusive Admissions and Incoming Class Update" to the Middlebury community on Feb. 7, which contained preliminary information about the demographics of the incoming classes of 2028 and 2028.5, and reaffirmed the college's admissions approach after receiving its first round of applications since the Supreme Court barred colleges and universities from employing affirmative action last June.

The college is committed to continuing to build a diverse class through a focus on recruitment initiatives that increase accessibility like the Discover Middlebury fly-in program and partnering with programs such as QuestBridge and Posse. At the same time, we call on Middlebury to clearly establish its support for diversity on campus by making the student experience comfortable for people of all backgrounds and requiring a formal diversity statement, as some of our peer institutions have.

According to the Feb. 7 email, Middlebury admissions received its third-largest Early Decision I applicant pool in college history, comprising students from all 50 states and 156 countries. Middlebury admitted 425 students from this pool, the most it has ever admitted in the Early Decision I round. Of the 425 students admitted, 43 would be the first in their family to attend college, an increase from 26 last year, and 33 are international students.

The email did not specify the racial breakdown of the students admitted. Since the Supreme Court ruling, admissions readers no longer have access to a demographic category of race or ethnicity while reviewing applications.

While Middlebury's choice to admit a majority of its incoming class through Early Decision is a logical one for yield rates, it is not necessarily an equitable one. Data indicates that students who apply early are disproportionately white, wealthy and more likely to be legacy students or student-athletes. In the 2022-2023 school year, 27% of students were athletes. Nine percent of students had a parent attend Middlebury according to Zeitgeist 5.0. Both legacy admissions and athletic recruiting have been referred to as "affirmative action for rich white students."

The email also noted that it is the second year of Middlebury's partnership with QuestBridge, a national program that identifies high-achieving, low-income high school students and matches them with elite colleges and universities. Middlebury is also a Posse Foundation partner — a program that works with select colleges to provide scholarships and leadership training to a cohort of students. Both programs provide full-tuition scholarships to selected students. The pool of students admitted through the Early Decision round included 7 QuestBridge scholars and 30 Posse scholars.

We appreciate the QuestBridge and Posse Foundation programs as valuable ways for Middlebury to continue to help ensure that high-achieving students from socioeconomically, racially and geographically varied backgrounds can attend Middlebury. Still, with only 7 and 30 students from each program respectively recruited thus far, such programs are only one small part of increasing accessibility.

In November 2022, anticipating the Supreme Court decision, we urged Middlebury to focus on their outreach infrastructure, including looking at revamping and increasing the Discover Middlebury program, which had shifted to virtual information sessions during the pandemic. We are pleased that the college hosted a Discover Middlebury in October 2023, and paid for 35 high school students from across the country to visit campus who could not afford to do so on their own. We call further on the Middlebury Admissions office to prioritize outreach to high schools at students that may not otherwise be inclined to apply to Middlebury.

In terms of the actual application, how can Middlebury continue to attract students from racially diverse backgrounds since the ban on affirmative action? Unlike Harvard and some other colleges and universities, Middlebury has not added an additional prompt to its application to allow applicants to write about their racial background. However, the Feb. 7 email reads, "Students may still share personal information related to their cultural and racial identities through written essays and their activities that take place outside the classroom."

The administration also writes that they are preserving the test-optional pilot program for at least another three years. Recent evidence, however, demonstrates that debates over the equity of such tests are not only misguided, but may serve to hurt diversity. Neighboring Dartmouth College recently reinstated its test policy, citing standardized tests as an important part of a holistic approach to admissions.

The college also needs a diversity statement. Many of our peer institutions explicitly state their commitment to diversity in their admissions pages. Amherst's statement, for example, asserts its dedication to prioritizing geographic, racial and ethnic, socioeconomic, and academic and extracurricular diversity among its student body. Adding such a statement would not only demonstrate Middlebury's commitment to diversity to applicants, but could also serve as a pledge to its current students.

In last November's editorial, we wrote that focusing only on the structural inequalities of admissions was not enough, and Middlebury must do better in providing support for BIPOC students once they are actually here as enrolled students. We continue to make that same request today.

It is encouraging that the college administration is thinking about how to preserve diversity of applicants going forward, but they must also remember the importance of supporting students of diverse backgrounds currently at Middlebury. In a rural, white state, the college has a duty to support students of color, such as recruiting BIPOC counselors, for which we have continually called.

The college can utilize concerted recruitment plans, but ultimately, it can never fully control who applies to Middlebury, nor can it use race as a factor in admissions after last June's decision. The college does, meanwhile, have the ability to support students already here. Making a strong effort to create a welcoming, safe space for students from all backgrounds reinforces the intellectual and community value of a diverse student body, and could in turn make a more diverse group of applicants want to apply to Middlebury in future admissions cycles.

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The Middlebury Campus

MUTUAL FRIENDS PLAYS FINAL CONCERT AT MIDDLEBURY

By SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI

Opinions Editor

COURTESY PHOTO

Lead singer Annabelle Iredale '23.5 (left) and other Mutual Friends band members perform on campus.

The much-loved and uniquely long-lasting student band Mutual Friends played their final show on Saturday, Jan. 28, just a week before five of the band's eight members skied down the Snow Bowl for the Feb celebration. In addition to lead singer Annabelle Iredale '23.5, guitarist Andrew Grossman '23.5, bass player Kai Fakuda '23.5, drummer Jon Jon March '23.5 and saxophonist Bess Gramling '23.5, the band included trumpet player Nate Corbett '25 and guitarists Charlie Moore '24 and Hans Kindstedt '24.

The band had a presence on campus lasting all four years of the recent graduates' time at Middlebury and a set of songs frequent audience members knew well enough to sing along to throughout the show. The crowd that flocked to the Brooker House basement brought an enthusiasm that matched the band's evident passion for making music.

The group could be seen soaking up the special moment amongst themselves with frequent smiles, glances and quick chatter in between songs. Their love for their craft radiated out to audience members who sang, danced and cheered along to some of their classic covers, such as "Animal Spirits" by Vulfpeck, "Fall Into Place" by Couch and "Sour Candy" by Melt.

The group attributed its ultimate sound, which they loosely identified as "indie funk jazz," to their rendition of this final track.

"I think when we rehearsed 'Sour Candy' it kind of struck a chord with everyone and I really feel like the repertoire that we chose after that was building off of that foundational work," Fakuda said.

"It's the one that's always the encore song," Moore added.

Though they were able to celebrate their finale with a large and consistent following, opportunities to perform were scant when the group first formed.

The group's debut performance, which they played under the name "Untitled Feb Band," was at a Wednesday Open Mic Party (WOMP) concert in March 2020. Only weeks into their first semester on campus, the certainty of a weekly slot to perform disappeared when the students were sent home. Upon learning this news, the band cobbled together two songs to play in just a day for what would be the final WOMP of that year.

"We were like, OK, it has to be tonight. So then we went to practice for hours," Iredale recalled.

When the original Mutual Friends arrived back on campus for the fall 2020 semester, the music scene that they had known during their first few weeks at Middlebury had largely vanished.

"It was wild to come back after being at that first WOMP and seeing like 100 people in that space and to be like 'Oh my God, this is what playing music at Middlebury is' and then the next semester having no opportunities," Grossman said.

They had to get creative if they wanted to play for an audience.

"We did a virtual gig in the Coff [Coffrin] Lounge... and we all had to be spaced out. And then we started that semester, we started playing outside a little bit," Iredale said.

Even amongst the constraints of Covid-19, the crew managed not only to keep playing together, but to expand the group. Gramling, Corbett, Moore and Kindstedt joined Iredale, Fakuda, March and Grossman, who were still technically playing as the Untitled Feb Band.

The introduction of the non-Feb Mutual Friends led the group to select their new namesake.

"We realized we had to change the name," Fakuda said. Inspiration for it struck while listening to a specific lyric from Animal Spirits. "We heard 'mutual friends' and were like immediately, like that's it," he said.

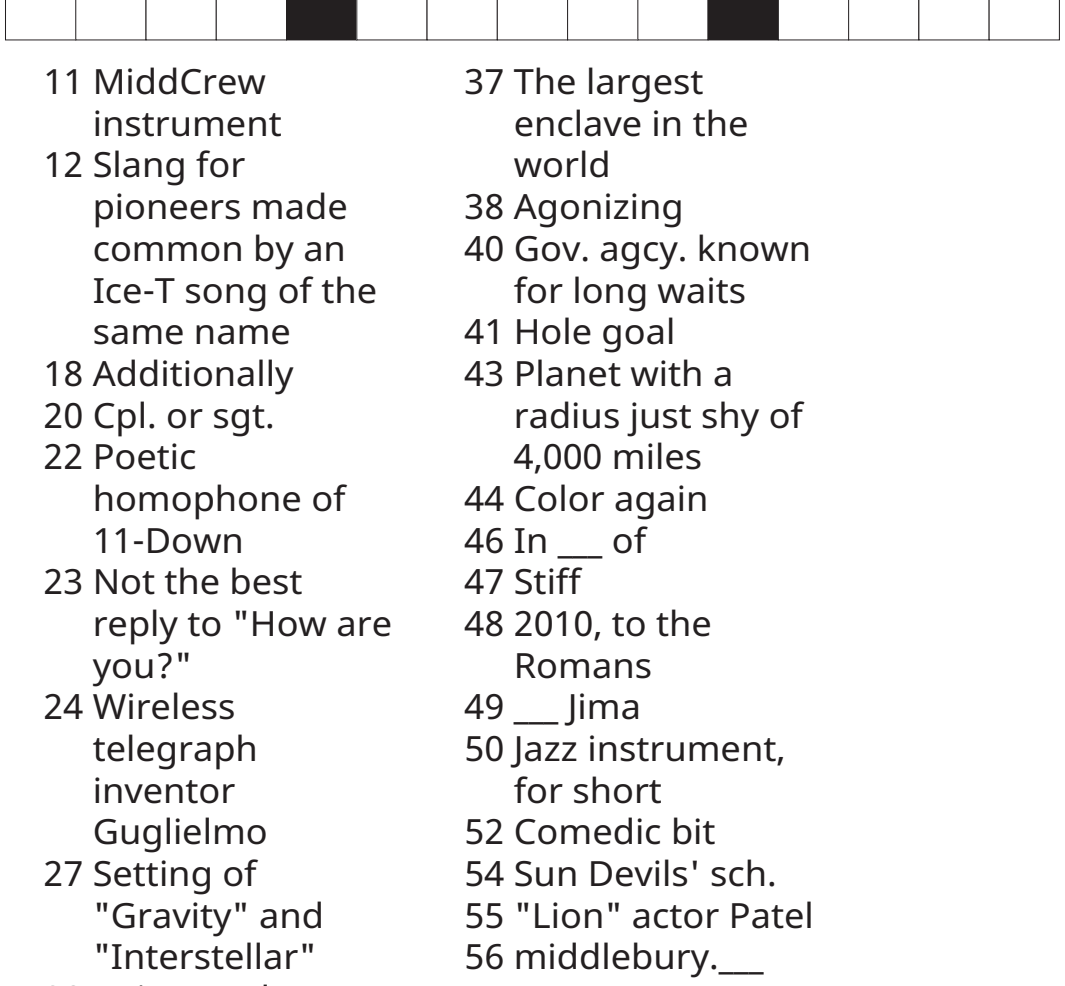
The group has come a long way since those early days. Now, students can't seem to get enough opportunities to see them play. Whether the group is performing a set at Nocturne or at a basement concert, there's always a crowd.

It is not just their danceable sets and talent that make Mutual Friends' shows so enjoyable. If you're lucky enough to get a spot dancing up front or are tall enough to see over the crowd that is sure to coalesce, it is clear that the band members enjoy playing just as much as their audience enjoys listening. Throughout the entirety of a performance, each and every Mutual Friend can be seen smiling, swaying and encouraging one another.

"My best friends came out of this band in college, and I think it's been my favorite part of college," Iredale said. "If we had more time here, there's no doubt in our minds that we could do this forever. I think we love it so much that we would never stop."

Sugar Crashing

Egan Turner



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5 2012 Pixar movie
6 "Baby ___": Michael Jackson song
7 "___ Maybe": Carly Rae Jepsen song
8 Like caramel
9 Volunteer's catchphrase
10 Classic Valentine's Day candy, and where you might find 42-Across, 60-Across, 61-Across, 62-Across, 6-Down, and 7-Down
11 MiddCrew instrument
12 Slang for pioneers made common by an Ice-T song of the same name
18 Additionally
20 Cpl. or sgt.
22 Poetic homophone of 11-Down
23 Not the best reply to "How are you?"
24 Wireless telegraph inventor Guglielmo
27 Setting of "Gravity" and "Interstellar"
28 Poirot and Drew, for example
37 The largest enclave in the world
38 Agonizing
40 Gov. agcy. known for long waits
41 Hole goal
43 Planet with a radius just shy of 4,000 miles
44 Color again
46 In ___ of
47 Stiff
48 2010, to the Romans
49 ___ Jima
50 Jazz instrument, for short
52 Comedic bit
54 Sun Devils' sch.
55 "Lion" actor Patel
56 middlebury.___